TWELVE ROYAL LADIES

SIDNEY DARK

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TWELVE ROYAL LADIES

CATHERINE DE MEDICI

1519–1589

TWELVE ROYAL LADIES

By SIDNEY DARK

AUTHOR OF
TWELVE BAD MEN
QUEEN ELIZABETH
THE STORY OF THE RENAISSANCE
ETC.

With portraits by
MABEL PUGH

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PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

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Printed in the United States of America by
J. J. LITTLE AND IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

My intention in writing the twelve sketches in this book is to interest the large and increasing number of readers, both in England and America, who are curious to know something of the history of the past, realising that it is impossible intelligently to live through the days of their own lives without having at least a partial understanding of the days that have gone before.

The personalities of the Twelve Royal Ladies are all interesting and suggestive. Some of them were great merely from the position into which they were born. One or two of them, at least, were great in their achievements. Most of them have been misunderstood and sometimes maligned. Nearly all of them were unhappy.

My judgments are, of course, my own, but I claim that they are justified by the facts as I have cited them. I realise, of course, that history, even popular history, cannot be impartial unless, indeed,

it is unreadable. Froude is the standing proof that the more partial and the more biassed a historical writer is, the more interesting he is to his readers. The individual attitude towards the great key events of history, such as the Reformation and the French Revolution, must of necessity affect the judgment not only of the actual protagonists of those dramas, but also of the personages who appear in the prologues and the epilogues.

The fact, for example, that during the reign of Queen Mary of England something fewer than two hundred and fifty men and women were burnt as heretics—probably about one two-hundredth of the number of Christians who have died for their religion in Bolshevist Russia—has caused the Protestant historian to present Queen Mary, a stubborn and pathetic woman of admirable intentions and of no small ability, as a blood-thirsty vampire, hungry for the blood of the faithful. Similarly, the Catholic historian, even when he is gifted with Mr. Hilaire Belloc's genius for reconstructing the past, almost inevitably fails to appreciate the great qualities of Queen Elizabeth.

The Virgin Queen does not appear in this volume, since I have already written an extended study of her character and her reign. She remains certainly the greatest of the great ladies of the modern world. No one has ever more successfully done evil that good may come of it. She intrigued and she lied most successfully to save England both from Rome and Geneva, and to lay the foundations of the British Empire.

The most romantic of the women with whom I have dealt is Mary Queen of Scots. So much has been written of her that it would be affectation to pretend that I have said anything that is new. I think that Mr. John Drinkwater was justified in calling the Scottish Queen "a great lover," but not, perhaps, in the exalted sense in which he used that term. She was a woman as gifted as she was beautiful—long sighted, patient and determined—and she threw away her crown and her life because she was unable to resist a wild physical passion for a complete and rather stupid scoundrel. Literally, Mary Queen of Scots lost her head for a bad man.

I have included Louise de la Vallière for two rea-

sons. First, because she, herself, is unique among the royal mistresses who have played a considerable part in the political history of Europe. For the most part they were greedy and ambitious and dissolute. Louise was timid and knew nothing of self-seeking. She had none of the character of Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of the husband of Catherine de Medici, a stern Puritan lady who ruled the King and the King's family with a rod of iron. Louise had none of the ambition of La Pompadour, a woman of culture who insisted on being Foreign Secretary to Louis XV, and worked the undoing of France. Louise had none of the strumpetry of Mme. de Montespan. She sinned, knowing that she was sinning, and paid the heavy price, gladly and almost eagerly.

Catherine de Medici was a true daughter of the Renaissance. Concerning everything except sex, she knew nothing of morality. She was responsible for the massacre of St. Bartholomew, but she never had a lover. She had no interest in religion except as it was a political instrument. She murdered with a calm conscience, but never without a cause.

Maria Theresa of Austria was a statesman with at least a rudimentary conscience.

Marie Antoinette and Josephine de Beauharnais were both fools. In times of widespread national discontent, some scapegoat will always be found as a focus for popular execration. Marie Antoinette was tragically unlucky. She was certainly innocent of all the fouler charges levelled against her, but the gay frivolities and extravagance of Versailles are facts not to be denied, and the Austrian woman was held responsible for all the sufferings of France. When the clouds gathered, she was bewildered by it all, and her counsel was always muddle-headed.

Josephine is the most lovable of my ladies, a superficial, lazy, ease-loving woman, crazily extravagant, utterly unmoral, but who never made an enemy and who met misfortune with appealing graciousness.

Caroline, wife of George IV of England, a queen who was never crowned, perhaps deserved all that she got. But her fate was hard enough, and her hectic life can hardly have had a day of satisfying

happiness. But this must be said of her, that she had a sense of humour, and humour rarely flourishes among the exalted.

Two, and only two, of my ladies can be said to have had even an average share of happiness and content. The Electress Sophia of Hanover, mother of George I., and great-granddaughter of King Charles the Martyr, died comfortably in the knowledge that the throne of England was assured for her descendants. And that strange creature, Christina of Sweden, who abandoned her throne because the crown bored her to death, apparently lived her last years in complete content at Rome.

And, on the whole, the moral of my sketches, if they have a moral, is, it is better to be born and to live in comparative obscurity than in the palace of kings.

It has been my endeavour to use each brief biography as a peg on which to hang an explanation of the events of a particular period, suggesting the significance of those events, and in particular as they have affected the international developments leading up to our own times. I have tried to ex-

plain as I understand, not making any claim to profundity of scholarship. I have told the stories in my own way, but though they are good stories, they are old stories. I have used personalities to explain events. I have written for the intelligent, but certainly not for the intelligentsia.

SIDNEY DARK

LONDON,
July, 1929.

CATHERINE DE MEDICI

CATHERINE DE MEDICI

IN the famous trilogy in which Alexandre Dumas tells the story of the later Valois kings, Henri of Navarre, gallant and gay, mocking and calculating, is the hero of the romance, and Catherine de Medici, the Queen Mother, at once fearful and relentless, is the villain. Her responsibility for the massacre on the Eve of St. Bartholomew has secured her permanent position among the greater villains of history. But it is true of nearly all the greater villains in history that their wickedness has been vastly exaggerated, and Catherine was probably innocent of many of the crimes of which she has been accused.

Miss Edith Sichell, a careful and accomplished historian, has written the story of Catherine's life in two long volumes, but, while Miss Sichell strives earnestly to be fair and impartial, she writes with an obvious Protestant prejudice not to be disregarded because of the occasional criticisms of the

Huguenots. Catherine as she lived was not so black as Miss Sichell has painted her.

Never at any time of her life did Catherine know anything of happiness or content. An orphan child, brought up in the midst of political troubles, and married, with no thought for her happiness, as an instrument for furthering her family's fortunes. A faithful and neglected wife, compelled to live in close intimacy with her husband's mistress, and generally to be subservient to her. A mother, devoted to her children, but far too intelligent not to appreciate the incompetence of her sons. A foreigner, ambitious for political power, ruthless in the defence of the rights of her family, fated to live in the most turbulent period of French history. And, at the end, a fat, weary, disappointed woman, beaten in all her plots, and assured that the prince whom she hated and feared was to wear the French crown. If Catherine de Medici was wicked, she was also assuredly unlucky.

Catherine was the daughter of Lorenzo de Medici, nephew of Pope Leo X. Her mother, a Frenchwoman with Bourbon blood in her veins,

died at her birth, and her father a few days afterwards. Catherine spent most of her babyhood in the care of Clarissa Strozzi, a stern lady with a deep sense of religion, but with none of the Renaissance enthusiasm for knowledge. The child, lone and friendless, lived sometimes in Rome, sometimes in Florence, and the little happiness that she had was when she was living with the nuns of the Murate convent where, at least, she was safe during the constant sieges and civil strife of the times. When she was eleven, Catherine desired to take the veil, but there is no evidence that she had any very strong vocation, and the small, thin girl with large, sad eyes was not unwilling to be escorted with due pomp and ceremony from the convent gate to Rome, where her cousin, Giulio de Medici, was now reigning as Pope Clement VII.

Ranke has described Clement as "the very sport of misfortune, and without doubt the most ill-fated pontiff that ever sat on the papal throne." Before his election he had shown great capacity as an administrator. He was experienced, astute, calm, and his personal life was eminently correct. But

he had no moral courage. He was singularly unfortunate in his political judgments, and consequently in his policy, and, in common with most of his contemporaries, he was entirely without scruples. He had decided that the interests of Rome would be best served by an alliance with France against the Emperor, and a marriage was accordingly arranged between Catherine and Henri, Duc d'Orléans, the second son of Francis I.

The marriage took place in Marseilles, when Catherine was fourteen and a half and her husband was fifteen and a half. The ceremony was characterised by a full measure of the typical Renaissance show and luxury, the little bride being dressed in white satin, with a royal mantle of gold spangled with pearls and precious stones. The Court of France was the gayest, the most luxurious, the most immoral, the most cultured Court in Europe. Francis was still under forty when Catherine arrived in France. He was the patron of the arts and the friend of scholars, and he had contrived to retain the love of laughter and the gaiety of heart which characterised the Renaissance at its begin-

ning, which found its most splendid expression in Erasmus and Thomas More, and was lost in the crafty statesmanship and bitter religious feuds of the later sixteenth century.

Francis had always at his side a *petite bande* of pretty women who hunted with him, dined with him, and laughed at his not too delicate jokes, and his daughter-in-law was at once enlisted in the band. She rode astride with skill and courage, and this commended her to the King. She was quick of wit and bold of tongue, and from her marriage till his death he was always a kindly and sympathetic friend. She found a friend of another sort in the King's sister, Marguerite d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, a lady of character and learning and the most influential of the patrons of the new religion. Francis himself had dallied with the Reformers, thanks to the influence of his mistress, Mme. d'Étampes, the lady with whom Benvenuto Cellini had his bitter quarrel, and he was always in favour of a modified religious toleration.

But, while Catherine was petted by her father-in-law, she was treated with courteous but cold in-

difference by her husband. Three years after his marriage he fell in love with the famous Diane de Poitiers, a widow seven years his senior, and he remained in her thrall till his death. If ever a woman made a man, Diane made Henri of Valois, who, owing to the death of his elder brother, became Dauphin of France in 1536. Miss Sichell suggests that she was to him what Mme. de Maintenon was to Louis XIV. But Mme. de Maintenon was never mistress, and her influence with the *grand monarque* only began in his later years.

Henri was a conscientious, diffident prince, terrified by his blustering father, who had not much affection for him, and fearful of himself. Diane was not beautiful. She was not passionate. She was, in Miss Sichell's phrase, "the most matter-of-fact woman in the world." The prince was hungry for affection, and she gave him what he wanted—companionship, care, appreciation. For Diane he wrote poetry of an order rare among the many kings who have written verse. Under her tutelage he acquired a new dignity, new ambitions, self-confidence. He remained, however, subject to fits of gloomy de-

pression, and, when he succeeded to the throne, there was far less laughter at his Court than there had been at the Court of his father, and infinitely less licence, for Diane herself was a model of propriety. During his reign, Henri won little glory and experienced much misfortune, but his record is not among the least worthy of the kings of France.

Catherine had been married ten years before a child was born to her, and Diane had dared to suggest that a divorce should be arranged, since the Dauphine seemed incapable of bearing children. When her son Francis was born, it was Diane who took the babe and cared for him. The same thing happened after the birth of each of Catherine's ten children, three of whom died in babyhood. Of her four sons, three reigned in succession in France as François II, Charles IX, and Henri III, and the fourth was the turbulent Duc d'Anjou whom Elizabeth pretended that she intended to marry, and to whom she addressed the notorious "little frog" letters. Her daughters were Elizabeth, the second wife of the gloomy Philip of Spain, whom she loved de-

votedly; Claude, Duchesse de Lorraine; and the fascinating Margot, who was married to Henri of Navarre, and who, in a century of dazzling figures, was the wittiest and the most blatantly immoral of them all.

Francis I died in 1547, and for twelve years Catherine was Queen Consort and a cypher. Diane brought up the royal children, very wisely, be it said. Diane took charge of Mary Stuart, the child Queen of Scotland, when she arrived at the French Court on the 15th August, 1548. Mary Stuart fascinated the French courtiers. The quiet, remote King took her to his heart, but Catherine always disliked her, the dislike probably beginning when she heard the witty child, very conscious of her royal heritage, describe the daughter of the Medici as *une fille de marchande.*

Henri's seriousness increased with his years. He was grey-headed before he was forty. He had no conversation, and music was his only interest. In his youth he had been inclined to the Reformed religion, but Diane was a fervent Catholic, and it was through her that the Guises acquired the pre-

dominant position that they held in French politics for so many years. François, Duc de Guise, was one of the greatest soldiers of the age, his only rival being the Protestant Coligny. His brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, was the astutest of statesmen and the most persistent of plotters. His sister, Mary, was Queen Regent of Scotland. His niece was to be Queen of France. Catherine hated the Guises at the beginning because they were the friends of Diane, and the hatred remained with her to the end of her days. She, indeed, always hated and feared the Guises far more than she hated and feared Henri of Navarre and his mother, Jeanne d'Albret. Because of her hatred of the Guises and of Diane, she was throughout her husband's reign the friend, and, in a small and ineffective way, the ally, of the Protestant nobles. But in these years, politically, she counted for nothing, and it is the measure of the character of this woman, with an aching greed for authority, that she was able to contain her soul in patience and wait her time. Henri was indifferent to her, but she loved Henri. Of that there can be no doubt.

And she was faithful to him. Catherine has been accused of many things, but she has never been accused of having a lover.

The settled policy of France in the sixteenth century was to prevent Europe from being completely dominated by the Hapsburgs. Charles V was Emperor of Germany, King of Spain, the ruler of the Netherlands, of Lombardy, Sicily, of Sardinia, and the possessor of a great colonial empire. For self-protection France was continually forced into league with the German Protestant princes, who were nominally the Emperor's vassals, and it was the necessity for these alliances that, from time to time, compelled the French kings to the toleration of Protestantism in their own country. In 1552, Henri left Paris to command his army, operating in alliance with the German princes in a campaign on his eastern frontier, which resulted in the capture of Metz, Toul, and Verdun. Fighting went on south and north, as well as east, with various fortune, and in 1557 Philip II, who had succeeded Charles V as King of Spain, captured the important town of St. Quentin. This misfor-

tune gave Catherine the first chance to prove her quality. When her husband left his capital, she had been made Regent, though with very restricted authority, and, when the news of the disaster of St. Quentin reached Paris, she showed that she was an acute and courageous politician. She prevented panic by appealing to the patriotism of the people for money to re-equip the armies, and the prestige that she gained by her prompt action was enhanced when Paris was saved through the courage of Coligny. She had been married for twenty-four years, and for the first time her husband paid her deference. He was a just man, if a gloomy, and he was careful to show his appreciation of his wife's promptness. From the day that he returned from the army he went every evening after his supper to spend the hours with Catherine that he had hitherto spent with Diane, and, in the Queen's honour, a medal was struck with the King's head on one side and hers on the other.

In 1558, Mary Stuart was married to the Dauphin, the miserable boy bridegroom of a daz-

zling little bride, little dreaming on her wedding morning in Notre-Dame what life had in store for her. A year later the King was killed in a joust—part of the festivities arranged for the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth with Philip II, which brought the war with Spain to an end. Catherine's grief for her husband was unquestionably sincere. "She is plunged in such grief for the loss of the late King," wrote Mary Stuart to her mother, "that I fear her misery will give her a bad illness." But grief did not prevent the royal widow from a not unnatural revenge. No sooner had the doctors declared that the King was dead than Diane was sent packing. But Catherine's position was still indefinite, and her chance of supreme authority must have seemed remote. She was now only the Queen Dowager. Dumas writes, in *The Page of the Duke of Savoy:* "At the gate, opening to the street, Catherine de Medici and Mary Stuart chanced to meet; and Catherine, according to her custom—a custom which had lasted eighteen years—was about to take precedence of the younger lady; but she suddenly stopped, and, giving way to Mary Stuart,

she said with a sigh, 'Proceed, madame; you are now Queen.' "

But Francis was too weak and Mary was too young to be Catherine's rivals. In his proclamation the new King used the phrase "this being the good pleasure of my lady mother," and it was the good pleasure of the Florentine that now became the dominating influence in the affairs of France.

Ruling France was no easy business. The Guises were rich, powerful, and able. They came from Lorraine. They had inherited the old rivalry between Burgundy and France, and they did not pretend to any great loyalty to the Valois family, or even to the French crown. Incidentally, they were extreme Catholics, as eager as Philip of Spain for the forcible extermination of heresy. The Montmorencys were the rivals of the Guises. Anne de Montmorency, the Constable of France, was a person of small account, but his nephew, the Admiral Coligny, was, as has been well said, the one splendid figure of dignity and character to be found in all the records of the Valois. He was a competent soldier and an ambitious statesman. His personal

virtue was conspicuous in an age of easy morals, and he was above all things loyal to the throne. Coligny was the most capable, the most devoted, and the most moderate of the Huguenot leaders.

The Bourbons were princes of the blood, and, if the Valois strain failed, the throne must be theirs. The head of the family was Antoine, a prince without character, without persistence, and without capacity, who was married to Jeanne d'Albret, and through her was King of Navarre and the father of the future Henri IV. His brother, the Prince of Condé, was an abler man. Both were nominally Protestants, but they had none of the genuine religious convictions of Coligny.

When Henri II died, Calvin himself estimated the number of Protestants in France as three hundred thousand. Francis II was sickly. It was certain that he could live only for a few years, and the ambitious leaders of the Protestants were plotting with Elizabeth, with Calvin, and with the Dutch Protestants for the formation of a league that would compel France to accept Condé as his successor. It is very necessary to understand the plots of the

Protestants if the reprisals of the Catholics are to be understood. France was predominantly Catholic. Paris was fiercely Catholic. Many of the Protestants were earnest and humble men, but their leaders were ambitious nobles, who were backed by a considerable number of reckless swashbucklers—every pirate in the English Channel was a Protestant from La Rochelle—whose deeds of violence and cruelty were every bit as horrible as the similar deeds for which the Catholics have been properly condemned.

At first it was expected that Catherine, who had been inclined to favour the Huguenots, would be for them a second Esther; but, with power once in her hands, she began to exhibit her characteristic craftiness. She could temporise as astutely as her sister Elizabeth. She forbade persecution, but she could not ignore plots against the person of her son. The Guises demanded wholesale executions. Catherine was all for moderation, but the Huguenots were immoderate, and a plot to seize Lyons landed Condé in prison and almost cost him his life.

The pathetic figure in all these intrigues was the boy King. Everyone knew he could not live long, and his mother and the Guises were mightily concerned as to how long he could live. He died, as a matter of fact, on 6th December, 1560, after a reign of less than eighteen months, with his wife and his mother wrangling by his bedside.

Charles IX was a boy of ten when he succeeded his brother, and Catherine was the natural Regent. It was necessary for her to have allies, and her hatred of the Guises caused her to turn to the Bourbons. Condé had outstanding capacity, but his brother, Antoine of Navarre, whom the Queen Regent invited to Paris, possessed "neither firmness nor wisdom." Under the influence of the Bourbons, Catherine for a while was distinctly pro-Protestant. Queen Margot wrote years afterwards: "All the Court was invaded with heresy." Catherine had as little real personal religion as Elizabeth, but it seemed to her—her statesmanship was never long-sighted—that her interests were with the Bourbons and the Huguenots, and even a long

sermon from a Protestant preacher was a small price to pay for a throne.

In the autumn of 1561 she called a conference at Poissy, near St. Germain, at which Catholics and Protestants were to discuss their differences and endeavour to discover a *modus vivendi*. Beza, the most distinguished of Calvin's colleagues, came from Geneva to make many eloquent orations, but nothing came of the conference. It was as impossible then as it is now to manœuvre union between men separated by fundamental differences of opinion and belief. Moreover, neither side could trust Catherine. "To whatever side fortune veers," wrote one of the Huguenots, "the Regent's chief care is to rule, and neither the Papists nor the Reformers will make her gamble away her destiny."

It is almost impossible to summarise the political plots and counterplots of the reign of Charles IX. Jeanne d'Albret came from Navarre to St. Germain, curious concerning her husband's vagaries. Jeanne was a woman of first-rate capacity, more a sceptic than a Protestant. "Had she lived in our own day," writes Miss Sichell, "she would have

been an advanced freethinker, probably a woman of science." In Paris she found that which she had feared. Her husband, to whom she was devoted, was already false to her, and was preparing to be false to her religion. The Guises had contrived a plan by which she was to be either divorced or removed and Antoine married to the widowed Mary Stuart. Meanwhile he had been lured into a pleasant temporary entanglement. Catherine, despite her own sex morality, had a flying squadron of ladies of less rigid principle, whose allurements were used for political purposes. One of them, La Belle Rouet, had succeeded in entrapping Antoine, and in entirely estranging him from his wife. The Guises were always closely in touch with Spain, and Antoine was promised the return of Spanish Navarre if he changed his religion and got rid of his wife, and on Palm Sunday, 1562, he publicly attended Mass with the Guises and the Constable de Montmorency.

This Catholic league was now all powerful, and Catherine realised that she must abandon her policy of toleration. The Huguenot nobles hur-

riedly left the Court, and with some difficulty Jeanne contrived to escape to Bearn, taking her daughter with her, but heartbroken at being compelled to leave her son Henri in Paris with a Jesuit tutor. Catherine herself was uneasy. She was afraid to let the King out of her sight. She even slept in his room. She hunted with him, walked with him, sat with him. She worked prodigiously and ate prodigiously. "Her complexion is olive-coloured," wrote the Venetian Ambassador in Paris, "and she is already a stout woman." And another writer speaks of her stealthy and crafty malice. Certainly the times demanded all her craft if she was to retain even the modified authority that she possessed.

In the spring of 1562 there was a massacre of Huguenots at Vassy, a town in Champagne. This was followed by Huguenot risings, accompanied with much slaughter, in four or five other towns. The Huguenots were persecuted. They had little protection except the caprice of the Queen Regent, but they were certainly provocative. They showed their zeal by blaspheming as the Host was carried to the dying. They were often guilty of gross acts

of sacrilege. They exasperated public opinion by eating meat publicly on Fridays and fast-days. They were always asking for trouble.

Catherine was accused, and justly accused, of first dallying with one side and then dallying with the other. But the aim of her policy was in some way or the other to secure peace for her country—internal peace and peace with Spain—and the problem was complex because the toleration of the Protestants, which she believed was necessary for internal peace, made a war with Catholic Spain always an imminent danger. "Her one aim is to rule," wrote the Cardinal de Lorraine. But that was also the Cardinal's one aim, and Catherine, again like Elizabeth, was persuaded that peace was necessary for her rule.

Despite all her manœuvrings, however, civil war began. The King and his mother were seized by de Guise. Orleans was occupied by Condé and Coligny, and more than twenty of the most important towns in France declared for the Protestants. Catherine was bewildered and terrified, but she did not lose her head, and she contrived to prevent the civil war

from spreading and devastating France. She persuaded de Guise to permit her to have a private interview with Condé, and, by astute cajolery, the Huguenot was induced to abandon the policy of force and to give a pledge that the Protestant leaders should cease from any hostile action until Charles reached his majority. The promise was not kept, and during the fighting of the next few months the Protestants gained a series of successes, and their armies threatened Paris. Antoine of Navarre was killed at Rouen, only his deserted wife regretting him, and the havoc wrought by the armies was appalling. In view of the world-wide indignation caused ten years afterwards by the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve, it is well to remember that one of the Huguenot leaders put to the sword a thousand men, four hundred and sixty women, and eighty children! The winter was particularly severe. Famine followed the armies, and eighty thousand of the poor in Paris died of cold and hunger.

Catherine again contrived to secure an interview with Condé, and delayed his advance to the capital

sufficiently long to enable the Spanish troops sent to de Guise by Philip to march into Paris. Thus reinforced, de Guise attacked the Huguenot army at Dreux, on the high road between Paris and Rouen, and won a complete victory, Condé himself being taken prisoner. And, undismayed by many failures, Catherine again set to work to patch up peace.

In February 1563, François, Duc de Guise, was murdered at Orleans. It was said that the assassin was in the pay of Coligny, but of this there is no proof, and, remembering the character of the man, it is most unlikely. But the murder began the deadly personal feud between the Guises and Coligny which had its culmination on the Eve of St. Bartholomew. The murder did not stay the negotiations, and by the Peace of Amboise—a very artificial peace—the Protestant leaders agreed to disband their forces. They were permitted the free exercise of their religion, but they secured this privilege only by betraying their poorer associates, for public Protestant services in the greater part of France were specifically forbidden. The Peace of Amboise was a victory for Catherine's policy, and, in a lesser

degree, a victory for the Catholics, and it was followed by the capture of Havre from the English, to whom it had been surrendered by the Huguenots. It was said of Catherine at the time that she would rather "that the realm were at peace without God than at war for Him," and personal opinion will decide whether that is praise or condemnation.

Dreux definitely convinced Catherine that for her the Catholic Codlin was the friend, and not the Protestant Short, and the wavering patronage, always dictated by policy, that she had for years been ready to give to the Huguenots, definitely came to an end. But the fear of Spain remained, the fear that always overshadowed Catherine's statesmanship, and, to compel Philip to a favourable alliance, she began the tortuous and always insincere negotiations for the marriage of Elizabeth of England with one of her sons. At first it was the boy King, then fifteen years old, whom she suggested as a husband for the Virgin Queen, then over thirty. Charles IX, a sad and pathetic figure, was by far the best of Catherine's sons, though he was destined to play a leading and, indeed, a hor-

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rible part in the greatest of the Valois tragedies. He had something of the soul of an artist. Ronsard was his friend, and the boy himself wrote tolerable verse. His love of beauty was the cause of his hatred of the Huguenots, which began when he made a progress through Bearn and Navarre and saw church after church defaced and robbed of its treasures by Huguenot fanaticism. Charles was kind-hearted, affectionate, gentle, but his temper was uncertain. He was capable of violent outbursts of passion, and he was obviously born with the taint of insanity. Catherine could almost always do with him what she would, and, when persuasion failed, she did not hesitate deliberately to work on his nerves and to excite his passions.

Fighting between Catholics and Protestants began again in November 1567. The Huguenots were vastly outnumbered, but in a battle at St. Denis they fought their way into Paris, burned churches, and stole the Mass vestments, which they made into coats. Spain sent a Spanish contingent to help the Royalists, and the Huguenots obtained German mercenaries from the Elector Palatine,

and then Catherine once more intervened, and another treaty was signed by which the Protestants obtained a qualified freedom for worship. The peace was, in effect, a very short truce, and the two parties were fighting again in 1568. In the spring of 1569 the Catholics, commanded by Henri d'Anjou, Catherine's third son, defeated the Huguenots at Jarnac, on the Loire, and Condé was killed. But Coligny reorganised the army, and, in a long series of small engagements that lasted into 1570, more than held his own, gradually fighting his way through France southward to Navarre. Then Catherine, always hungry for peace, without money to pay the mercenaries in her service, and fearful that Elizabeth would send large forces to aid Coligny, offered terms which the Huguenot leader could not well refuse. By the Treaty of St. Germain, signed in August 1570, the Protestants obtained freedom to worship and the right to public office on the same terms as the Catholics. Four key towns, one of them La Rochelle, were handed over to them for two years as a guarantee that the terms of the treaty would be kept.

Two years before, in 1568, Catherine had lost her eldest daughter Elizabeth, Queen of Spain. Her death was a blow to her mother's policy, for while she lived it was at least possible that Philip would hesitate to embark on open hostilities against France. Margot, the unmarried daughter, had an increased importance in her mother's eyes after Elizabeth's death, and a Spanish marriage which never eventualised was contemplated. Meanwhile, Elizabeth was again approached, this time to marry Henri d'Anjou. There is little to be said to the credit of this prince, but he had at least sufficient sense of humour and propriety flatly to refuse to have anything to do with the negotiations, referring with brutal candour to the Queen of England's age and ugliness and declaring that the stories of Elizabeth's familiarity with Lord Leicester made her impossible as the consort of a French prince. So far as Elizabeth was concerned, the discussions were merely part of the intricate international intrigues which filled the whole of the first four-fifths of her reign. It is quite impossible to believe that she ever had any intention of marrying Henri d'Anjou, any

more than she had of marrying his elder brother Charles or his younger brother François.

In 1571, Coligny was back at Court and high in the favour of the King, now a tall, gawky boy of two and twenty, with the wrinkled face of an old man. He loved poetry; he loved music; he had taste; he had courage; he was not without dignity or without kindliness and tact. Though he remained under the influence of his mother, he resented the position of subservience, and, while he feared her, he had no sort of love for her. Coligny fascinated the young man. He urged that the King's first business was to give France unity, peace, and freedom. Then he urged that France should imitate Spain and gain for herself great foreign possessions. The Netherlands could be gathered within her boundaries with the consent of the people. New and dazzling possessions in America could be won from Spain. It was just the talk to inflame a boy who was at once a dreamer and a king hungry for glory. Catherine watched the new friendship with keen apprehension. She detested war, as Elizabeth detested it. She feared foreign adventures, particu-

larly because they might be the prelude to the end of her authority, but also from the point of view of commonsense pacifist statesmanship. But her fear of Spain and the Guises made it impolitic for her to quarrel with Coligny. Her obvious next move, in the circumstances, was once more to win over the Bourbons, and the skittish Margot was the pawn that she played. Margot was overhead in love with Henri de Guise, but her mother was determined that she should marry Henri of Navarre. She urged Jeanne d'Albret to come to Paris with her son and daughter, offering them safe conducts. and Jeanne replied in a characteristic letter, in which she said: "I do not believe that you eat little children, as folks say you do." None the less, Jeanne left her son behind, and, after a long private interview with Catherine, a marriage between her son and Margot was finally settled, both queens agreeing to disregard the difference of religion, Jeanne at least with some misgiving. She feared for her son a wife who had been "bred up in the most accursed and rotten company." Jeanne went to Paris for the wedding, and died there three months

before it took place. It is said that she was poisoned. As a matter of fact, she died of consumption. She was only forty-two, but weary and worn out by the struggles of her life.

Her death was a great blow to Coligny and the Protestant cause. The Counter-Reformation was doing its work, and Protestantism was losing the little hold that it had had on the French people, and it was impossible for Coligny to shut his eyes to the character and ambitions of the well-born Huguenots, to whom religion was a pretext for political intrigue. Moreover, he was at last alive to his personal danger in remaining at Court, and conscious of the growing antipathy of Catherine. But he liked the young King, and the young King liked him. He was still ambitious to play a part in statesmanship. He still dreamed of a French Netherlands.

In August, Henri of Navarre arrived in Paris for his wedding, with a large Huguenot following, and in the city, too, were the Guises, with an even larger following. The wedding took place on 18th August. There was a tense air in the city, which, it should

be remembered, was entirely and vehemently Catholic, and a conviction that there must be a clash between the Huguenots and the followers of the Guises. On the 22nd, Coligny was shot and badly wounded by a bravo in de Guise's employ. The King was furious, and, though he refused permission to the other Huguenot leaders to leave Paris, he himself called on the wounded admiral, imploring him to come to the Louvre for safety. The Huguenots exaggerated the value of Charles's apparent friendship. They flaunted themselves in the streets and started foolish brawls—and de Guise and his men remained in hiding. Then at street corners and in the passages of the royal palace there were whispered rumours of a threatened Huguenot rising, in the course of which Charles was to be murdered and a Protestant king installed in his place. There may have been some small justification for these rumours, but they were vastly exaggerated by Catherine's order, and care was taken that they should reach the ears of the King. The repeated warnings terrified him. His nerves were played upon until they frayed and broke, and

in a fit of absolutely insane frenzy he gave the fatal order: "If you kill the admiral, kill all the Huguenots in France, so that no one shall be left to reproach me after it is done." And then the boy became absolutely insane, and he who had opposed his mother became hungry for blood.

If it be accepted that Catherine was mainly responsible for the St. Bartholomew massacre, what defence, if any, can be urged for her? She could not doubt that Henri de Guise intended that Coligny should be killed in revenge for the murder of his own father. There could be no doubt, as Charles himself realised, that the murder of Coligny would be the beginning of another devastating civil war between Protestants and Catholics. Catherine was perfectly willing that Coligny should die. She was jealous of his influence with her son. She mistrusted his imperialistic dreams. But she wanted to save herself, and she wanted to save France from another civil war, and the extermination of the Huguenot leaders seemed the only possible policy. It was cold-blooded, it was appalling, it was infamous, though the slaughter was nothing

compared with the massacres of our own day, which have left a refined and civilised generation entirely unmoved. The Protestant world was naturally shocked. "The authors of the massacre," said Beza, "will be held in perpetual execration." Burghley declared that it was the greatest crime that had been committed since the Crucifixion. Philip is said to have approved. Elizabeth was properly, and no doubt sincerely, shocked, though within a few months of the massacre she was again engaged with Catherine in negotiations for a French marriage. Henri of Navarre, who knew his mother-in-law thoroughly and was not unmindful of her difficulties, declared that religion had nothing whatever to do with the massacre. It was caused alone, he said, by jealousy. The truth is that it was deliberate political policy, and that it was only made possible by the imprudence of the Huguenots themselves.

One result of St. Bartholomew's Eve was the beginning of the important political party known as the *Politiques*, mainly Catholics, moderate in their politics, desiring peace and toleration, who were led at first by François, Duc d'Alençon, Cath-

erine's youngest and most unstable son. Another consequence was the bitter remorse of the King, who conceived a violet hatred for his mother and fell into an almost unbroken state of morose gloom. Perhaps because she had no heart, Catherine was unmoved on St. Bartholomew's Eve, and was unaffected by the odium which it brought her, though she was considerably surprised and annoyed that the Huguenots remained a potential source of mischief.

In 1573, Henri d'Anjou, the Queen's favourite son, was elected King of Poland. He was an affected decadent who was to bring the rule of the Valois to an end in an air of disgusted ridicule, but he had shown some qualities as a soldier, and he achieved something of a success in Cracow. The youngest son, d'Alençon, continued to be an unmitigated nuisance. He was ambitious and he had some capacity, and he was always dreaming of, and plotting for, a kingdom of his own, either as the husband of Elizabeth or the monarch of the French Netherlands.

At the beginning of 1574 it was clear that Charles's death was imminent, and Catherine was

consumed with anxiety. Her favourite son was in Poland. D'Alençon was intriguing with his brother-in-law, Henri of Navarre, and, though she had whipped them both to heel, she feared that, if the throne became vacant, d'Alençon might contrive a successful usurpation. Charles's end was pitiful. He died on 30th May rejoicing that he had no male child to wear the crown after him. Couriers galloped across Europe to tell the King of Poland that he was now King of France, and Henri at once secretly left Cracow. But he lingered for months on the road, philandering at Venice with ladies and poets and artists, and arrived in France perfumed and bejewelled, with a Court of *mignons*. Catherine was with him when he made his entry into Lyons, and with him, of course, when he was crowned at Rheims.

Henri was the last and the worst of the Valois, a coward, a sexual decadent, lazy, indifferent. He was an old and weary man when he was twenty-four. He was bald and toothless when he was thirty-six. At the beginning of his reign the Huguenots were again united, and were in dangerous alliance

with the *Politiques*, and Catherine, with perfectly splendid effrontery, considering St. Bartholomew's Eve, assured them that she would do her best for them, as she always had done, "provided they will believe me and be reasonable." Oddly enough, Catherine, generally shrewd in her judgments, appears to have been proud and satisfied with the only one of her children whom she really loved. She encouraged him in his wild extravagances; she was loudest in applause when he spoke effectively, as he sometimes did; she was blind to his vices.

Catherine was now fifty-five, and had grown fat. She constantly overate. She suffered a great deal from rheumatism, but she was often jovial, and she had a keen appreciation of coarse humour. But she grew more and more fearful of political complications, and more and more inclined to consult and to trust alchemists and soothsayers. Thanks to the influence of the *mignons*, Henri soon grew impatient of her guidance and control. His mother wrote to him: "I have no wish to live any longer. I have never cared for life since your father died, excepting as I might serve you and God." There

were three people at Court whom she feared—her son d'Alençon, her daugher Margot, and her son-in-law, Henri of Navarre; and of the three she feared her daughter most. The King had a certain tepid friendship for his brother-in-law, but he hated his brother and sister, and the Court became the scene of complicated intrigues, half political and half amorous, and quarrels and plots which only a Dumas can adequately describe.

At the end of 1575 the Huguenots were again in arms, and were badly defeated by de Guise, but Navarre contrived to escape from Paris. D'Alençon was now a sort of Protestant hero, and his marriage with Elizabeth was again discussed, and in 1577 peace was once more arranged by Catherine's diplomacy. Certain concessions were made to the Huguenots, but the treaty, like the half-dozen others that she had negotiated, was obviously merely a temporary truce.

The history of France in the reign of Henri III is largely the history of plots and counterplots for possession of the Netherlands. D'Alençon was the principal figure in these intrigues. He had in-

herited Coligny's dream of a vast extension of French dominions to the north. His brother was unlikely to have a son, and he regarded himself as the future King of France, with territories as vast as those of the Empire. Henri resented his brother's ambition, and Catherine was distracted by their quarrels. In 1578, d'Alençon marched into the Netherlands to be used, though he did not realise it, as a tool by William of Orange, to be hated by the Dutch, and completely to fail.

For the next three years, Catherine, with amazing energy, journeyed from one end of France to the other, endeavouring to assure the internal peace which had been her one steady political aim, for which she had bribed, plotted, and murdered. She was fat, she was rheumatic, but she was tireless. She gave audiences while she dressed, while she ate, and almost, it was said, while she slept. Sciatica was added to her rheumatism, but she went on conciliating, undermining, eager to weaken the influence of the Huguenots on the one side, and even more eager to checkmate Henri de Guise on the other; thinking, as she always

thought, of the security of the House of Valois. In her letters there is the constant expression of her grief at being away from the son she idolised. "I have never been so long without this happiness," she wrote, "ever since he was born." The result of the journeys and the negotiations was that Margot was restored to her not too willing husband—as a matter of fact, to begin her liaison with Turenne, the most famous of her many love-affairs—and at Narac an agreement between Protestants and Catholics was signed which was the foundation of the famous Edict of Nantes. The Queen had hardly returned to Paris when Condé threatened trouble in Picardy, and she was off again successfully to persuade him to leave the country. The turmoil, the cross-currents, the moves and counter-moves of these years are difficult, indeed, to follow. D'Alençon was planning another trip to the Netherlands, and Catherine dashed south to Touraine to prevent the adventure. Her letters to d'Alençon were angry and not without dignity. She is bitterly disappointed. "I had promised myself a happy old age," she said, "after all the evils and

the crosses I have suffered, and after my toiling and moiling I had hoped to bring about the felicity of this House." But d'Alençon would not be stopped. When it was apparent that he intended to march against the Spanish forces, it was obviously good politics that he should succeed, and Catherine secretly sent him money and reinforcements. But his success was slight, and, in true Valois spirit, tiring of the business, he crossed to England in a final endeavour to win the hand of Elizabeth. D'Alençon stayed long enough in England to become an intolerable nuisance, and, to get rid of him, Elizabeth aided him to return to Flanders, where in 1582 he was proclaimed Duke of Brabant. There was a year or so of success, the usual plottings on all sides, and a final ignominious return to France. Catherine was glad enough that an expedition, calculated to have troublesome international complications, should have come to an end, and even more glad that d'Alençon should not have become a rival to his brother. But she was growing more and more apprehensive. She was worried by the conviction of at least partial failure

in her political plans. She was disturbed by the quarrels of her daughter and son-in-law. She was not the woman to trouble much over sex irregularities, but Henri was too open in his intrigues, and, in a letter to him of singular interest, she protests with dignity against the slights to which Margot was subjected. "To insult her for the whim of a disreputable woman is hardly the treatment for a high-bred lady descendant of so great a House." And Margot came back to Paris to receive worse insults from her mad brother than she ever had from her husband.

D'Alençon died in 1584, and Navarre was now the next heir to the throne. The king continued his life of grotesque idleness, and Catherine grew more and more gloomy. Old age was creeping on her. "I can no longer endure hard toil as I used to do." Navarre was invited to come to Paris and once more to abjure the Protestant religion. He refused to do either, and in 1585 Henri de Guise was unquestionably the dominating figure in France. He was backed by the full force of the Catholic League. Miss Sichell well says that the

League, which was to play a great part in the story of France during the next century, was at once anti-national and democratic. It was certainly democratic, since the vast majority of the people of France were Catholic. It was anti-national, Miss Sichell says, because it constantly sought the aid of Spain and Spanish troops. But the nationalism that has dominated Europe for over three hundred years was in its infancy at the end of the sixteenth century, and the French Catholic still felt himself more nearly allied to the Spanish Catholic than to the Frenchman who had rejected the old faith. It would be truer, therefore, to say that the League was supernational rather than anti-national. The object of the League was to prevent a Protestant Bourbon from succeeding to the throne, and Catherine had now to deal at the same time with the Huguenots in the south and west and with the League in Normandy.

She rushed from Paris, old and fat as she was, to interview de Guise, with the result that her son promised everything that the League demanded. Paris received de Guise as conqueror,

and the King showered favours on him while Catherine travelled south to endeavour to win over Navarre. But Henri had received a considerable force of mercenaries from the King of Denmark, and was ready to fight, and unfortunate France saw in 1587 *la guerre des trois Henris*. The whole thing was a struggle for personal power, each prince using religious prejudices for his own end. "The Guises," Montaigne said, "are hardly Catholics. The King is hardly a Protestant." The King was compelled to flee from Paris for fear of the people, and de Guise might have been King of France as well as king of Paris but for his aristocratic contempt of the mob, on whom he was compelled to depend, and the shifty policy of Philip of Spain, whom he regarded as a necessary ally. Catherine was ill and almost in despair, and in the kaleidoscopic changes of contemporary politics she now appeared as the ally of de Guise against her son. All through these months Henri of Navarre remained in Bearn, quiet, watchful, refusing all the advances made to him.

At Christmas, the King, the Queen Mother, and

de Guise were all at Blois—the King venomous, de Guise arrogant, Catherine so ill as to be forced to remain in her bed—and on 23rd December de Guise was assassinated by the King's order and in his presence. He rushed to his mother and told her what had happened—"*Je suis seul roi maintenant*" —and at once her busy, practical brain tried to find a way out of what she realised was a fatal blunder. "May God annihilate me, may He damn me, if ever I dreamed this crime or counselled it," she declared. She gave her son what advice she could, but she realised that she had played her last card and had lost.

Catherine de Medici died on 5th January, 1589. "She has done much good and much evil in her day," said a preacher in a Paris church; "more evil, I think, than good." And it was recorded that "a few of her servants and some of her familiars wept for her, and so did the King—a very little." She had courage, humour, acuteness, immense ambition, and no man or woman has ever lived in this world with less conscience and with fewer scruples.

MARY OF ENGLAND

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1516–1558

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ON the night of 16th November, 1558, Mary Tudor, the first Queen Regnant of England, lay dying in St. James's Palace, neglected and almost alone. Her sister, Elizabeth, was at Hatfield, and all the Court, including the Spanish Ambassador, the representative of Mary's husband, was already greeting the rising star. Before dawn on the 17th, Mass was said for the last time to the dying Queen. The celebrant priest came to the *Agnus Dei*, and Mary repeated in a clear voice, "*Miserere nobis, miserere nobis. Dona nobis pacem!*" and then she died. She was in her forty-second year. She had reigned for five years, and rarely, if ever, has a princess of good intention and talent suffered so much and failed so completely.

Mary was born at Greenwich on 18th February, 1516, a healthy baby with fair hair and brown eyes. Katherine of Arragon had many children by Henry VIII, but Mary was the only one of them to sur-

vive. The little princess was baptised on the third day after her birth, with Cardinal Wolsey as her godfather. She was a precocious child of acute understanding, and she received the usual elaborate education of a Renaissance princess. In her childhood she was a remarkable musician, and was notable for her gay disposition and joyous laughter. She was taught to speak French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin—Linacre, the physician friend of Thomas More, was her Latin tutor—but, unlike Elizabeth, she apparently was never taught Greek. Among the books that she read before she arrived at her teens was More's *Utopia.*

. A possible husband was discussed when the child was five, for a king's daughter was then little more than a diplomatic instrument. It was first suggested that she should marry the Emperor Charles V, her first cousin and many years her senior, and the father of Philip, who was, years afterwards, to be her husband. Then, when Henry was anxious for an alliance with France, he proposed to François I, who was a widower, that he should take his baby daughter as a second wife. When that ar-

rangement came to nothing, there were negotiations for a marriage with the French King's son Henri, who afterwards married Catherine de Medici. It is interesting to imagine what might have happened if Catherine had remained at home in Florence and if Mary had become Queen Consort of France as well as Queen Regnant of England.

Henry divorced Katherine in 1533, and Mary, a girl of seventeen, who had hitherto been a person of consequence and importance, became the object of deliberate, mean, and stupid persecution. But she had her full share of Tudor spirit and Tudor courage. She declined willingly to surrender any of her rights. She remained steadfastly loyal to her mother, from whom, by a refinement of cruelty, she was separated by royal decree. Her mother wrote her letters containing advice wise enough in the circumstances. She was told "to speak few words and meddle nothing," to hide her thoughts, to obey the King, "save only that you will not offend God and lose your soul."

Katherine believed that Henry intended to put

his daughter to death, and there is every reason to believe that, after the birth of Elizabeth, he did consider this cold-blooded crime in order to ensure the throne for Anne Boleyn's daughter. By the Act of Succession of 1534, Katherine was declared no longer Queen and merely the widow of Henry's elder brother, Prince Arthur, and Mary was consequently legally illegitimate. Katherine could be persecuted, but she never could be cowed, not even by Henry. Queen she was, and Queen she would remain. Mary had to bear the full brunt of her father's anger at her mother's obstinacy. Her friends were arrested and sent to the Tower, and for three years she herself was constantly threatened with imprisonment. In January 1536, Katherine died at Kimbolton, leaving her daughter her jewels and her furs, and begging her husband to be good to her, and, five months afterwards, Anne Boleyn was executed on Tower Hill.

The execution naturally seemed to Mary the vengeance of God for her mother's wrongs, and, with considerable astuteness, she set about cultivating good relations with Jane Seymour, whom

Henry married within a month of Anne Boleyn's death. As a good Catholic, Mary could regard Jane as a legitimate wife, while the marriage with Anne was a mockery. Moreover, Jane Seymour was a good-natured woman who was eager to be on good terms with the King's daughters. But Mary went strangely far in her desire to placate the King, though it is fair to remember that she was only nineteen, without a single friend or adviser. She signed a document in which she acknowledged the King to be the supreme head of the Church, and agreed that her mother's marriage was illegal. The document was drawn up by Cromwell, and it is more than likely that it was hinted to Mary that the severest consequences would follow a refusal to agree. After signing the document, Mary was permitted to live at Hunsdon with a considerable household and with the baby Princess Elizabeth, for whom she had a genuine affection and whose early education she directed.

Mary was a healthy young woman with a lusty Tudor appetite and remarkably wholesome tastes. She had large hazel eyes, a large retroussé nose,

and a deep voice. She was short, but well made, and her movements were dignified and graceful. She had her father's humour, and an amiable manner which assured her a large measure of popularity. Indeed, when Jane Seymour died, Mary was probably the most popular person in England. The immense majority of the people was faithful to the old religion, and hated Cromwell and all his works. The little Prince Edward was a sickly boy whom no one expected to live, and work-a-day England looked to Mary to undo the detested "reforms" for which her father was responsible.

But, though Mary was now treated with a certain amount of consideration, her life must have been still full of apprehension. Cromwell's reign of terror was thorough and ruthless. The headsman and the hangman were busy, and, despite the insincere apostasy to which she had been compelled, Mary must have known that she continued to be suspect, and might, at any moment, be the victim of Henry's ungovernable ferocity. Her fidelity to the Church had never faltered, and she bitterly resented the raiding of the monasteries and Cromwell's ruthless

pillaging. The reign of terror became fiercer after the failure of the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1538, and Mary's position more difficult and hazardous. One of the objects of the Pilgrimage was to give her back her full rank, and she was accused of harbouring refugees from the monasteries. The climax of her troubles came with the beheading of her first friend, the Countess of Salisbury, then in her eightieth year, for no other reason than that she was the mother of Reginald Pole. A year after the execution of the Countess of Salisbury, Thomas Cromwell went to the block, and Mary would, indeed, have been more than human if she had found anything to regret in his entirely proper end.

Meanwhile, proposals had been made for her marriage with the Protestant Duke Philip of Bavaria, who found her a comely and most attractive princess. The negotiations were broken off, but Philip had been so much attracted that six years afterwards he again proposed, and, being unable to marry Mary of England, married no one at all.

The year 1540 was the year of the arrival in

England of Anne of Cleves. The familiar story is that Henry found his German wife so unattractive that he first beheaded Cromwell, who had been responsible for the match, and then divorced the lady. The truth is that he had already fallen in love with Katherine Howard, and that he was weary of Cromwell and fearful of the results of his policy. Anne was a comfortable and amiable German, who accepted her divorce philosophically, probably regarding it as a preferable alternative to Tower Hill. She and her step-daughters were very good friends, and it was owing to the influence of Mary that Anne joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1552.

Katherine Howard's reign was a short one. Cranmer and the extreme Protestants, with whom he was becoming more and more familiar, detested her, mainly, it is said, because she told improper stories and made the King laugh. She was apparently incapable of bearing children. There is little doubt that she was generous in her favours to her lovers, and in 1543 she followed Anne Boleyn to the executioner's block. Five months afterwards Henry married Katherine Parr, who, in a modified

way, was to him what de Maintenon was to Louis XIV.

Katherine Parr was a learned Protestant, but, despite her sincere attachment to the new religion, she had a deep and appreciative friendship for the Princess Mary. She insisted that the Princess should have her proper position at Court, and she secured recognition of his daughter's rights from the King, who, in the last years of his life, was little more than an obese maniac. It is said that, before his death, Henry expressed to his daughter repentance for his ill-treatment of her mother, and in his will, that settled the succession, it was set out that if Prince Edward had no heirs he was to be succeeded first by Mary and her heirs, and afterwards by the Princess Elizabeth and her heirs. There is little doubt that the terms of the will were dictated by Katherine Parr. She died a year after the King, although in that short time she contrived to find herself a fourth husband.

Mary was very ill at the beginning of her brother Edward's reign, and, as a result of that illness, she was a delicate and sick woman until the end of

her life. The Protestant zeal of the Protector led to renewed petty persecution of the princess, who was deprived of her chaplain and forbidden to hear Mass. She did not suffer this persecution patiently. She went in state from Wanstead to Westminster, every one of her attendants wearing a huge rosary of black beads at his or her girdle. The young King declared that she must obey his orders, but her kinsman, the Emperor Charles V, intervened on her behalf. The harassed English Government could not risk a quarrel with the Empire, and until the end of her brother's reign Mary was allowed the exercise of her religion.

The death of Edward VI found Mary a Tudor indeed. In a will, obviously the work of Northumberland, Edward had sought to upset the succession arranged by his father and had left the crown to Lady Jane Grey, a charming and attractive girl of sixteen and one of the most tragic of all the victims of political intrigue. The bulk of the people of England were Catholic. Northumberland was the most detested man in England. There was still a queer sentimental regard for Henry VIII, and the

people were determined that his daughter should succeed her brother.

Mary acted promptly. She was at Hunsdon when her brother died. She rode at once to Framlingham Castle, on the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk, where for a fortnight she received the homage of East Anglia from great nobles and from peasants. She was proclaimed Queen of England at Norwich on 3rd August. She was received with enthusiasm at Ipswich. On 6th August she was at Wanstead, where she was joined by her sister, and from there she made a triumphant entry into London, to be proclaimed by the shouts of the citizens and the apprentices. Notable prisoners, including Stephen Gardiner, were released from the Tower, where the Queen stayed until after her brother's funeral.

Where her faith was concerned, Mary was quite incapable of compromise, and, at the beginning of her reign, she was persuaded with difficulty by the ambassador of Charles V not to insist that her brother should be buried according to the rites of the Catholic Church. She apparently did not see

that this would have been impossible, and indeed, indecent, since he himself was a heretic. Edward was buried in Westminster Abbey, but the Queen was not present, nor, indeed, was Elizabeth, but Cranmer officiated, probably not without apprehension. As a matter of fact, it was the last great ceremony in which he took part. Trevelyan has said of Mary that "if she had been a sceptic, or even a moderate in religion, she might in after years have been remembered as Mary the Humane," and he adds that she had no national pride. The Whig historian fails to add that "national pride," for which in the succeeding centuries Europe has paid so dearly, was in the early stages of its existence when Mary became Queen of England. Mary had the Catholic vision, which is certainly finer, as it is more comprehensive, than a merely national vision. She blundered because she believed. The tragedy of her life was that she had zeal without discretion; that, with all her intelligence she never realised the circumstances with which she had to deal, and that, in her endeavour to undo the anti-Papalism of her father and the

definite Protestantism of her brother, she forced the pace and at once excited Protestant hostility and timid Catholic fears.

In one respect Mary was wiser than her counsellors. She resolutely opposed the execution of Lady Jane Grey, "a helpless girl who had evidently been the tool of others." But she had no mercy —and in this she was certainly justified—for Northumberland, even though in his last days he turned Catholic in a vain endeavour to save his neck.

Mary was crowned on 1st October, 1553. Cranmer was in the Tower, and Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, placed the crown on her head. Elizabeth was in the Cathedral with Anne of Cleves, and all due honour was paid to her, and among the other ladies present was a granddaughter of Sir Thomas More. The ambassadors of the Protestant powers were at the ceremony, and of the popularity of the sovereign with her people there could be no question. But if the people were jubilant on the coronation day, the great nobles, who rode in the Queen's train and who had grown rich on lands

filched from the monasteries, were very uncomfortable.

Cardinal Pole was expected in England, and Parliament had been summoned to meet four days after the Queen was crowned for the one and only purpose of repealing Protestant legislation and restoring the union of the English Church with Rome.

Possibly it was hatred of Northumberland more than love for Mary that inspired the popular enthusiasm for the Queen. But it is an exaggeration to suggest that the Catholic sovereign was acclaimed by a Protestant people. The majority of the aristocracy and of the middle class would have willingly followed Gardiner in the acceptance of Henry VIII's middle way. The presence in England of foreign Protestant congregations and the German Protestant preachers, imported by Cranmer, was widely and bitterly resented. The majority of the clergy, reasonably perplexed by the conflicting demands of Tudor autocracies, retained the old faith. When Ridley followed Bonner as Bishop of London he had to deplore the fact that his clergy

still persisted in "counterfeiting" the Popish Mass. It is true to say, indeed, that in 1553 the population of England was ninety-five per cent. Catholic. The people sympathised with Mary for the persecution of which she had been the victim. They were eager for the restoration of the old religion. But the wealthy and highly placed receivers of stolen goods, many of them professing to be fervent Catholics, were determined not to surrender their wealth without a struggle, and, when it came to be a question of money or religion, most of them threw overboard religion without hesitation. Even the cheers of the people were accompanied by a certain anxiety. Who would the Queen marry? That was the question on every lip. Mary had already made up her mind, and, when any Tudor mind was made up, opposition only strengthened determination. She had fallen in love with the picture by Titian of her cousin, Philip of Spain, and she had determined that he should be her husband.

Henri II of France had a very capable ambassador in London, de Noailles, a shrewd and plotting man who, in order to prevent an alliance dangerous

to the interests of his master, took pains to aggravate the English prejudice against a marriage with any foreign prince. Stephen Gardiner, one of the most capable and certainly the most misjudged of Tudor statesmen, once again Chancellor, was opposed to the Spanish alliance, and was in agreement with the popular demand that the Queen should marry one of her subjects. Early in her reign the Queen for this reason began to regard the wisest of the men who were to be her counsellors with a certain suspicion—a grievous misfortune for her, which was to have many other misfortunes as its consequence.

The marriage with Philip was a fatal blunder. When the faded Tudor virgin married, she was, all unknowing, taking the first step towards that aggravation of national sentiment which induced the mass of the English people, within a generation, to accept the overthrow of the old religion and to become nominally Protestant, though most of them from that moment ceased to have any religion at all. The anti-Spanish sentiment, as unreasonable in 1554 as most popular sentiments are,

was to become active and real. The two nations were struggling for empire on the Western seas. The hatred of Spain inclined English sentiment towards Protestantism, for not only was Spain Catholic, but its sovereign was the chief ally of the Pope. It may be said that England became Protestant on the day that the Armada sailed.

The negotiations before the marriage with Philip were pathetic if only because Mary was always sincere and truthful. She had to receive assurances of Philip's morals. She hesitated. She spent many hours in prayer, and she was entirely at one with Gardiner—here again she was a true Tudor—in insisting on a marriage treaty which preserved for her all her sovereign rights and made Philip a mere King Consort. Foolish as the marriage eventually proved to be, at the moment it might well seem to be politically wise. De Noailles was engineering a double plot. Backed by the Protestants, he was trying to arrange a marriage between Elizabeth and the brilliant Courtenay, the eldest son of the Earl of Devonshire, who had spent most of his life in the Tower, while as a second string he was plotting

with the malcontents to oust Mary from the throne in favour of Mary Queen of Scots, now the youthful and beautiful Dauphine of France. It was natural that Mary should have felt unable to stand alone, and that, determined as she was to restore the old religion, she should have been eager to count on the support of the most powerful of the Catholic princes.

Before the end of the first year of her reign, Mary had begun the fatal religious persecutions, and it is important to remember that the Spanish Ambassador, possibly from policy rather than from any humane considerations, deprecated these persecutions. Lady Jane Grey was condemned to death, foolishly, but not unjustly. Latimer and Ridley were the first of the Protestant martyrs. In order that the pace might not be hastened, the Emperor Charles V contrived to prevent Pole from arriving in England until after the marriage with Philip.

The Queen's forthcoming marriage was announced to Parliament by Gardiner on 13th January, 1555, and to the Lord Mayor and aldermen of the City of London on the following day. A

flash-in-the-pan rebellion in the West, and Wyatt's rising in Kent, were the immediate results of the announcement. Froude, and even the much more impartial Mr. Martin Hume, would have it believed that Wyatt's rising was the result of popular anger, but, while the majority of the people were opposed to the royal marriage, they had no sort of sympathy with rebellion. The Queen behaved with resolution and courage. The City of London stood by her, and the rebellion came to a speedy and pitiful end. There is not the smallest doubt that Elizabeth was privy to the conspiracy, though she was far too shrewd openly to side against her sister, and her short imprisonment in the Tower, remembered for her melodramatic declaration of innocence and loyalty, was certainly not undeserved.

Philip had no enthusiasm for a marriage with a woman ten years his senior. His was a gloomy but sincere religion, and he came to England as a religious duty, disregarding not only his inclination as a man, but his pride as a prince, and it could not have been easy for a Spanish prince in the sixteenth century to forget his pride. He was

well acquainted with the difficulties and even the dangers that would face him in England. "I am going," he said, "not to a marriage feast, but to a fight." Philip sailed from Corunna with an escort of over a hundred ships, carrying three thousand soldiers. He was sailing, he said, to "our new realm of England for the exaltation of our holy faith and the good of Christendom." He was escorted up Channel by ships of the Flemish and English navies, and he anchored in Southampton Water on 19th July. Mary was awaiting him at Winchester.

There had been anxious months since the signing of the marriage treaty. The Queen was constantly changing her mind concerning the treatment of heretics and rebels. Her health had grown worse, and she was becoming more and more obsessed with a gnawing jealousy of her younger and more brilliant sister. Froude, with true Protestant zeal, has described Philip on his landing in England as "a poor creature suffering badly from the result of sea-sickness and dreading English poison." But, as a matter of fact, the prince's manner was admirable, and, as always when in Eng-

land, he behaved with proper courtesy and dignity and, indeed, with an affability in contrast with his usual manner. He rode to Winchester wearing the ribbon of the Garter, which had been bestowed on him on his landing, with an escort of Spanish grandees and two hundred English gentlemen. On the way he was met by Gardiner, who, as he knew quite well, had opposed the marriage, but whom he treated with studied deference.

On 25th July, 1554, the feast of St. James, the patron saint of Spain, Mary and Philip were married with glittering pomp in Winchester Cathedral, the ceremony lasting for hours. A month later, on 17th August, the King and Queen made a state entry into London, the joy of the citizens being stimulated by the fact that nearly a hundred chests of bullion—the treasure that the Spanish prince had brought with him—were carried in the procession. But the horde of Spanish courtiers resented the fact that their master was not given immediate precedence. They thoroughly disliked England, and they found the Queen extremely tiresome. "She is a perfect saint," one of them said, "but she

dresses very badly." And the English, who were becoming intensely insular, resented the presence in London of grandees from Madrid as much as they had resented the presence of Protestant fanatics from Geneva. There was rioting in the streets, with affrays between Philip's followers and the London apprentices.

But Philip never ceased to be conciliatory. He had married Mary with the double purpose of restoring the English Church to its allegiance to Rome and of binding England in a close alliance with Spain against France. His purpose was quite well understood. At a time of poverty and distress, the people were vehemently opposed to continental military adventures, and the fact that Mary's Spanish marriage associated the Roman obedience with subservience to a foreign power did more than any other event of the sixteenth century to persuade the majority of the English people to what was at first a hesitating and unwilling acceptance of Protestantism.

Cardinal Pole, Mary's cousin, was eagerly waiting for the invitation to come to England, inspired

with a zealot's enthusiasm for re-conquest, but Pope Julius III and the astute Emperor Charles V were opposed to any hurried or extreme action. In the Parliament that met soon after Mary's marriage, it was made perfectly clear that the great nobles who had been enriched by the spoils from the monasteries would not surrender one acre. They would submit to papal authority, but they would not restore the property of the Church, and Mary, with Philip at her side to urge wisdom, was compelled to accept the situation, declaring that she must be content to set a good example by herself giving back what she had inherited of Cromwell's spoil.

When Pole arrived on 5th November, he too was forced to accept the situation. Pole was warmly received. He was an Englishman, he had been persecuted, and it was hoped that he would act as a restraining, and possibly anti-Spanish, influence in the Queen's Court. On St. Andrew's Day, in the banqueting-hall at Whitehall, the sovereigns and the representatives of Parliament made their submission to Pole as the representative of the Pope.

Cranmer was already in the Tower. It is undoubtedly true, as it was unquestionably natural, that Mary held Cranmer in particular aversion. She could not forgive him for having pronounced her mother's divorce. She had suffered at his hands through the long years of neglect. He had been privy to the conspiracy to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne—an act, Canon Anthony Deane says, not merely of cowardice, but of treason and perjury. It is true that Cranmer was acquitted of the charge of treason, and eventually burned for heresy. The burning was one of the tragic blunderings of Mary's reign, but it is difficult to feel that the end of the Archbishop's life was inappropriate to a career of much twisting and many changes of mind.

There can now be no sort of doubt that Mary was herself responsible for the Maryan persecutions. Soon after her marriage she became a very sick woman, though she never lost her Tudor courage, even when she had to be carried on a litter to public ceremonies. She grew more unattractive in appearance. She was soured by her disappoint-

ment in not bearing a child, by her failure to carry out her religious and political reforms, and by the ever-increasing jealousy of her sister Elizabeth. And in this mood of despondency, with her pathetically narrow vision, she regarded it as a sacred duty to purge her country of heresy. Philip disapproved of the persecutions. His Spanish chaplain boldly denounced them in a sermon. Gardiner was more than half-hearted. Bonner, for all his roughness, took immense pains to discover grounds for acquittal, and, but for Mary herself, England might never have suffered from the immense and inevitable revulsion for which the persecutions were responsible. It must be remembered that some of the victims were Anabaptists who would have been equally liable to suffer if Elizabeth or James I had been on the throne.

Philip stayed in England until 29th August, 1555. His father was worn out and almost senile, and an historic abdication made Philip sovereign of Spain, Burgundy, and Flanders, and of the Spanish possessions in the New World. During his absence from England he was continually in touch

with English affairs, naturally constantly intriguing to secure a genuine English alliance. His influence obviously depended on the life of a dying woman, and Mary heard with growing aggravation of approaches made by the Spanish Ambassador to Elizabeth, who, indeed, had now become the most important political personage in England.

In February, 1557, Philip was again in England, welcomed with pathetic joy by his wife, and, in the summer, he at last persuaded Mary's Ministers to declare war on France and to join Spain in the operations which concluded with the loss of Calais, the culminating humiliation of a sad woman's life. Calais fell on 17th January, 1558. Mary died ten months afterwards, with her cousin and only real friend, Cardinal Pole, dying across the river at Lambeth.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

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1542–1587

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

IN 1566, Mary Stuart was firmly established on the throne of Scotland, and not unreasonably expected to mount the throne of England as the successor of her cousin Elizabeth. Five years before, a widow of barely twenty-one, the most attractive princess in Europe, and one of the most accomplished, she had returned from France to Scotland to an atmosphere of dour hostility and suspicion. But she had endured and conquered. Her marriage to Darnley strengthened her position in Scotland, and added to her claim to the English crown, since Darnley had his own remote right to the succession through his mother, Lady Margaret Douglas.

Elizabeth, who had no use for comfortable illusions, feared her comely and ambitious rival. When Elizabeth was crowned three-quarters of her subjects were, as even Green admits, still Catholic, and, in the seven years from 1558 to 1565, Protestantism had made comparatively few converts.

The Queen had still to establish her great popularity. She was harassed by the fear of a great Catholic league, and she and her minister, Cecil, were thoroughly well aware that the north of England would have welcomed Mary Stuart if she had crossed the border, and would have been overjoyed at the prospect of the restoration of the old religion.

Less than two years after her star was at its zenith, Mary Stuart actually crossed the English border, fleeing from her rebellious subjects—broken, discredited, friendless, destined to a long imprisonment, and, after nineteen years, to the headsman's block in Fotheringay Castle. Perhaps, more than any other of the conspicuous figures of history, Mary had herself wantonly contrived her own ruin. She was not the victim of political intrigue, of domestic treachery, or of foreign hostility. She had bartered the whole world for her passion for a bad man. Few men, and still fewer women, have ruined themselves for lust or love. The writers of romance have vastly exaggerated the influence of passion in human affairs. And there is

no exact parallel case to the tragedy of Mary Queen of Scots. She was a woman of quite remarkable capacity. She was an extremely astute politician. She had a very sure place in the drama of her day, and she tossed it all away for Bothwell—in Cecil's phrase, "as naughty a man as liveth, and much given to the most detestable vices."

Mr. Drinkwater has described Mary as the "great lover," ruined because she could find no man to give her all that she demanded:

> Not Riccio nor Darnley knew,
> Nor Bothwell, how to find
> This Mary's best magnificence
> Of the great lover's mind.

But, as a great lover, Mary resembled Catherine of Russia far more than she resembled Louise de la Vallière. Her passion was impetuous, overmastering, and evanescent, but, until she fell under the spell of Bothwell, she had not failed in calculation and discretion. Darnley appealed to her as "the lustiest and best proportioned man that she had seen," but her marriage was dictated by a long-sighted policy. Riccio may or may not have been

her lover. Remembering her temperament, it is probable that he was, though there is no evidence of the smallest value of her guilt. His intimate relations with her infuriated the drunken Darnley, and were a cause of offence to the Scottish lords, and the association may therefore be regarded as a political blunder. But, on the other hand, Riccio was indispensable in the delicate negotiations with Spain, with France, and with Rome, and his cosmopolitan culture was some solace for a young and beautiful woman who had spent years in the fascinating and unmoral atmosphere of the French Court, and was always an exile in her own land. Her affection for Riccio was natural and defensible. But her love for Bothwell was utterly and entirely irrational. Her marriage to him was one of the great blunders of history, one of those blunders the consequences of which not even a miracle could prevent. It was Bothwell who compelled her on to the scaffold at Fotheringay.

The princess, described as "the most unhappy of an unhappy race," was born nine years after the birth of Elizabeth. A few months before her birth

a Scottish army had been defeated by the English at Solway Moss, mainly because the Scottish nobles, with their usual indiscipline, refused to obey the general whom the King had chosen. It was an ignominious defeat, and the Scottish King, sick in body and weary of incessant trouble, took to his bed. And, when he heard that a daughter had been born to him instead of the son whom he ardently desired, "he commended himself to Almighty God and spoke little from henceforth, but turned his back to the Lords and his face to the wall." James died, and Mary Stuart, a tiny baby, was Queen of Scotland and the centre of vastly complicated political intrigues.

In the last years of his reign, it was the ambition of Henry VIII to establish an English overlordship in Scotland and Ireland. James V had steadily refused to follow his brother of England and to break with the Pope, and Scotland, even though the commonalty was far more attracted to the Reformed religion than the people of England, retained the traditional suspicion of England and the traditional friendship with France, Mary's mother,

Mary of Guise, possessed not a little of her family's great ability. To her, her baby girl was something more than a queen and a pawn in a political game, but, none the less, she was a realistic politician, and, so far as her influence went, it was steadily used with discretion and foresight. The regency fell by right of birth to James Hamilton, Earl of Arran, a pliable, unstable, self-seeking nobleman, first blowing hot and then cold, and doing neither for very long. But the dominant personality in Scottish politics was the famous Cardinal Beaton, a loose-living prelate, a patriotic statesman, and the first Scotsman to receive the Cardinal's hat from Rome. Beaton had represented James V in Paris, and was a steady supporter of the alliance with France, an alliance evidently necessary if Scotland was to be saved from the predatory schemes of the English King. He was equally and properly a vehement opponent of the Reformed religion, but his persecutions of the Reformers—they have been grossly exaggerated—were extremely bad politics, as persecutions always are. They stimulated rather than discouraged the enthusiasm of the preachers,

and they strengthened the pro-English party in Scotland.

Immediately after the death of her father, Henry demanded the arrangement of a marriage between the baby Queen and his son, Prince Edward, stipulating at the same time for the surrender to him of the Scottish border fortresses. Mary of Guise, Frenchwoman though she was, favoured the marriage treaty. It would have assured her daughter's future, and a foreigner could not be expected to share the general Scottish hatred of incorporation with England which the marriage must sooner or later entail. Beaton opposed the marriage. Arran was sometimes in favour of it and sometimes against. But the popular sentiment in all classes, and among the Protestants as well as the Catholics, made the surrender of any Scottish possessions impossible, and, in 1544, Henry, in one of the fits of ferocity that always follow successful resistance to his will, sent an English army into Scotland under the command of the Earl of Hertford, better remembered as Somerset the Protector, with orders which have been well described as unmatched in

modern European history. Hertford was instructed "to burn Edinburgh town, and to raze and deface it, when you have sacked it and gotten what you can of it, as there may remain for ever a perpetual memory of the vengeance of God lighted upon it for their falsehood and disloyalty. . . . Sack Holyrood House and as many towns and villages about Edinburgh as ye conveniently can. Sack Leith, and burn and subvert it, and all the rest, putting man, woman, and child to fire and sword without exception, when any resistance shall be made against you. And, this done, pass over to the Fife land, and extend like extremities and destructions in all towns and villages whereunto ye may reach conveniently, not forgetting, amongst all the rest, so to spoil and turn upside down the Cardinal's town of St. Andrews as the upper stone may be nether, and not one stick stand by another, sparing no creature alive within the same, specially such as either in friendship or blood be allied to the Cardinal." The orders were to a large extent carried out. Cities were destroyed and famous abbeys and monasteries were burned.

It was Beaton whom Henry particularly hated. He encouraged the plots against the Cardinal's life, and he was certainly privy to his assassination in 1546, in his own castle of St. Andrews. His murderers seized the castle, and there they were joined in 1547 by John Knox, who was to play so sombre a part in the little Queen's life.

Henry died in January 1547, and Francis I of France, whom he had met years before on the Field of the Cloth of Gold, died in March. The Guises exercised predominant influence over his successor, Henry II, and they contrived that French forces should be sent to Scotland to aid their kinswoman, the Queen Dowager. The French captured St. Andrews, and Knox was sent to the galleys. Immediately after the accession of Edward VI, Hertford —now Somerset—again invaded Scotland, won the battle of Pinkie, and demanded the formal betrothal of the Scottish Queen to the English King. But Scotland grew more obstinate in defeat, and the victory of Pinkie merely added to the general hatred of England and the English.

It was now urged by the Guises that Mary should

be affianced to the Dauphin and that, with the idea of a French marriage, she should be taken at once to be educated at the French Court. It was dislike of anti-papal England rather than excessive love of Catholic France that caused the Scottish Parliament to approve the French marriage, in spite of the extreme Protestants. Knox, indeed, bewailed that Mary was "sold to go to France to the end that in her youth she should drink of that liquor that should remain with her all her lifetime for a plague to this realm and for her final destruction." On the 15th August, 1548, Mary, a child of six, landed in France. Four other Marys were in her suite—Mary Fleming, the lusty Mary Livingstone, the beautiful Mary Beaton, and Mary Seton, who was to remain with the Queen in her years of misfortune, and who was distinguished by her skill as "a busker" of the hair.

Mary was a very self-possessed young lady, tall for her years, with laughing brown eyes and an irresistible charm of manner. She was seen, and she conquered. The rather gloomy Henry II described her as "the most perfect child that I have ever

seen." Catherine de Medici said that she had only to smile to turn all French heads, and Brantôme records that when she spoke her own harsh language it seemed "quite beautiful and agreeable in her, though not in others."

There has been immense exaggeration in the description of the immorality of the French Valois Court where Mary was to spend the most impressionable years of her life. The Queen, Catherine de Medici, whatever else may be said against her, was a wife whose fidelity to her not particularly attractive husband has never been questioned. It is true that the King had a *maîtresse en tître*, Diane de Poitiers. But Diane, like many other women in similar positions, was a stickler for propriety of speech and discretion in action. Her influence at the Court was far greater than the Queen's. She very largely directed Mary's education, and while at the Louvre there was an easy tolerance and no very high standard of morals, it is very doubtful whether society in Paris in 1550 would not compare favourably with society in London in 1929. The atmosphere of the Court was

distinctly serious and intellectual. Francis I, a true son of the Renaissance, stood for the joy of the new era, but with the accession of his son the Court had become far less gay. None the less, it remained *le monde, où l'on s'amuse*, and generally with imagination. Tilting, hawking, tennis, archery, and hunting were the daily amusements of the courtiers, and proficiency in dancing was the mark of the educated and the well-born. Masques, elaborately rehearsed, were frequently performed. Music was universally studied, and Mary learned to sing with charm and to play the lute, the harp, and the virginal. She spoke French like a Frenchwoman. She was taught Spanish as well as Latin and Greek. Ronsard was her friend, and she herself wrote indifferent poetry. At twelve years old she was a highly accomplished girl. She was given a separate establishment of her own, celebrating the occasion by a supper-party to her maternal uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine. The Paris Parliament declared that she had attained her majority at the beginning of her twelfth year, and, without consulting the Scottish authorities, she used her au-

thority by appointing her mother Regent of Scotland so long as she herself remained in France.

The marriage of Mary Tudor with Philip of Spain made the Guises anxious formally to establish French influence in Scotland. Faced by the possibility of an alliance of England, Spain, and the Empire, France had to assure herself of at least one ally, and, acting on suggestions from her brothers, and in order to secure the support of the entire Scottish people, Mary of Guise adopted a benevolent policy to the Protestants, and it is hinted that there was both Scottish and French support for the Protestant plots against the Catholic Queen of England.

Mary of England was, it should be remembered, the one sovereign of the sixteenth century who always put fidelity to her religion above political expediency. To Elizabeth, religion was entirely a question of political expediency. Philip of Spain realised the unwisdom of Mary's persecuting zeal, and would have prevented the Smithfield burnings. When Mary died, he was ready for an alliance with Elizabeth, and, until the Armada sailed, he was for

ever discussing alliances against Catholic France, sometimes with England and sometimes with Scotland. Catherine de Medici hesitated long before deciding that the Catholics were likely to be more effective allies than the Huguenots. She would have gone to Geneva to retain the French crown as willingly as Henry of Navarre went to Mass to secure it.

On 24th April, 1558, Mary was married to the Dauphin in Notre-Dame. Before the marriage she had signed a contract which practically made Scotland a vassal of the Kings of France. It is not to be supposed that Mary did not realise what she was signing, but she regarded herself as a Frenchwoman, she looked forward to her future as a Frenchwoman, and far-away Scotland, of which she could have had only the most meagre memories, and those not too pleasant, seemed of small consequence compared with the land of her adoption. She was a stately, appealing figure as she stood at the altar, in heavy blue velvet robes and a golden coronet, by the side of her sickly boy husband—"a hundred times more beautiful," it was said, "than a goddess in heaven." In the evening a great

banquet was given to the bride and bridegroom in the Palais de Justice, followed by a dance and the performance of many masques, and for days there was a series of popular entertainments.

Six months after the wedding Mary Tudor died, and Mary Stuart was at once proclaimed in Paris as Queen of England. It might have been supposed that all Catholic Europe would have approved, but Philip of Spain, always jealous of France, had supported Elizabeth's claim to the throne during his wife's lifetime, and at once recognised her as sovereign, with the suggestion, as I have said, of a treaty of alliance. This was the beginning of those diplomatic intrigues that lasted almost to the end of Elizabeth's reign. Mary's claim to the English throne was not very much more serious than the claim of English kings in comparatively recent times to the French throne. Mary would have been content, at this time, to be recognised as Elizabeth's heir. She wrote letters to England, addressing the Queen as "her dear and loved sister and cousin." In the summer of 1559 Henry II died from a wound in the head, received during a tournament, and

Mary became Queen Consort of France. Eighteen months afterwards she was a widow.

Never did prince die in so grotesque an atmosphere as Francis II, the seventeen-year-old King of France. Only his wife and his mother, with the three Guises, were allowed in the room. Catherine had taken a bitter dislike to her daughter-in-law, and the two women wrangled while the boy died, and the Duke of Guise, realising that with the King's death his supreme political power would pass, shouted and upbraided the physicians, accusing them of having poisoned the King.

The death of Francis was a tremendous misfortune for Mary, made the more bitter from the fact that her mother, for whom she had the deepest of affection, had died six months before. The Regent's death gave the Protestant party in Scotland supreme political authority, and by the Treaty of Edinburgh the French troops in Scotland were sent home. In Paris, Mary was almost friendless. A great political figure while her husband lived, she had become of comparatively small account, and her uncles, the Guises, for a time showed little

interest in her fortunes. She had lost her husband and her crown. She had small hope of reigning in Scotland, and the widow of eighteen brooded over her disaster "with constant tears and passionate and doleful lamentations." Francis had hardly been dead a week when suggestions were made for his widow's remarriage. The Kings of Denmark and Sweden were among the suitors for her hand. She herself desired nothing except to stay in France. She may have dreamed of marrying Charles IX, her husband's brother, but the enmity of Catherine de Medici made that impossible, and she certainly would have infinitely preferred to have remained a French dowager than to have returned to her own country.

The Guises were eager to arrange a marriage with Don Carlos of Spain, first to consolidate their own power, and then as the basis of a Catholic league against the Protestants, and Philip of Spain was by no means adverse to the proposal. But Catherine de Medici intrigued hard to prevent the arrangement being carried out. The Guises were her enemies, and she threatened Philip that, rather

than allow them to acquire the influence that the marriage of Mary and Don Carlos would bring, she would make a formal alliance with Elizabeth against Spain. Failing a Spanish marriage, the Guises, still regarding Mary as a great family asset, finally persuaded her to return to Scotland. There at least she would be a Queen, and might again be an international figure. In France, Catherine was strong enough to prevent her from being anything more than a shadow.

In the months that elapsed between the death of her husband and her return to Scotland, Mary showed judgment and discretion in face of the greatest possible difficulties. John Knox had returned to Scotland in 1559 after long consultations with Calvin in Geneva. He was received with acclaim by the people, whose new Protestant fervour was increased by his undoubted eloquence, while, at the same time, he established so thorough an influence with the Protestant nobles that for once they acted together with something like agreement and unanimity. It was owing to Knox that the French troops were sent out of the country.

After the death of the Queen Regent, Parliament —or, rather, a packed Protestant convention swayed by Knox—met, without the royal consent, and passed Acts abolishing the authority of the Pope in Scotland, condemning all Catholic doctrine, and forbidding the celebration of the Mass. It was clear, of course, that this legislation was intended as the first step towards the deposition of the Catholic Queen. But, despite this declaration of hostility, Mary was determined, when she had decided to return, to rule Scotland with the consent of the Scottish people. She would have no French troops at her back, and she declined the suggestion that she should land in the north and march with a Catholic army to the capital to re-establish her throne and the old religion.

Her position was complicated by the ceaseless manœuvrings of her cousin. In 1560, Elizabeth professed to be considering a marriage with the Earl of Arran, who had some pretence to the Scottish throne. As always in her endless matrimonial intrigues, she never had the slightest intention of actually marrying. The fact is, as Mr. T. F. Hen-

derson has pointed out, that Elizabeth had very little interest in Scotland and none of her father's ambition to consolidate the two countries into one nation. She had, however, a considerable fear of Mary. Mary stood for dangerous French dominance in the north of Great Britain, and Elizabeth was jealous of Mary's beauty and charm. If she could, she would have prevented the journey from France to Scotland.

Bothwell was in Paris in 1560. Although he was a Protestant, he had a curiously violent hatred of the English, and on more than one occasion had been of considerable service to the Queen Regent. His greatest achievement was the seizing of a thousand pounds which Elizabeth had sent to Scotland as a bribe to the Protestant Lords. This sum Bothwell appropriated for himself. He probably took with him to Paris letters of commendation to Mary from her mother, and the adventurer, who had already had amatory adventures more or less disreputable, fell under the spell of the Queen. He stayed in Paris for some months, and, before her own return to Scotland in 1561,

he was sent by Mary to Edinburgh as one of the Commissioners to summon the Scottish Parliament.

On a sunny August morning Mary stood on the deck of a large rowing-galley—painted red and flying a "blue flag with the arms of France, and in her stern another white flag glistening like silver" —looking back wistfully to the harbour of Calais and the receding shores of France. "*Adieu, France; c'en est fait. Adieu, France; je pense ne vous revoir jamais plus.*" Mary landed at Leith on the 26th. Her reception in the capital was friendly but not enthusiastic. She was welcomed by her illegitimate brother, Lord James Stuart, who had been foremost in persuading her to return and who had pledged his word that she should be permitted the free exercise of her religion. But this was too much for Edinburgh's Protestant sentiment, and on the Sunday following, when Mass was being said in the private chapel at Holyrood, it was surrounded by a howling mob, calling for the death of the idolatrous priest. Public anger grew greater when, in a violent sermon, Knox declared that the Mass

was more fearful to him than if ten thousand armed enemies were to land in Scotland.

But Mary had come from France with a definite policy of conciliation. She was eager for toleration. She pledged herself not to interfere with the religious settlement that had been made by Parliament. And her charm, her grace, and her good looks might have conquered Scotland had it not been for Knox.

She was told of his denunciations, and, with the fine courage that hardly ever failed her, she invited him to a private interview, and to one of the most remarkable conversations that can ever have taken place. Mary was nineteen, cultured, quick-witted, a fascinating gentlewoman. Knox was fifty-six, masterful in manner, with dark eyes looking out under shaggy eyebrows, fanatical, immensely self-assured, amazingly ill-mannered. The girl answered the divine with great dexterity and unquestionably had the best of the argument. "I perceive," she said, "that you would have my subjects obey you and not me." And Knox answered, "All men must be subject to God and His Church." "Yes," was

Mary's quick reply, "but your Church is not my Church." Finally Knox told her that he was as content "to live under Your Grace as Paul was to live under Nero, so long as you defile not your hands in the blood of the saints of God." And after his interview he declared that the Queen had "a proud mind, a crafty wit, and an obdurate heart against God and His truth." Knox, however, was persuaded by Lord James Stuart to allow Mary to say her prayers in her own way.

Her first progress through Scotland must have been a trying experience, for everywhere there was evidence of Protestant ascendancy. She held herself well in hand, refused to be led into premature action, and made no public comment on the manner of her people.

When she returned to Scotland, Mary was, as she remained to the end of her life, a convinced and instructed Catholic. But she was never a fanatic, and she was a shrewd and ambitious politician. Froude never wrote anything more wildly biased and extravagantly untrue than his suggestion that in 1561 this girl of twenty was determined

at all costs "to restore Catholicism," that she threw herself amongst "the most turbulent people in Europe" in order "to use her charms as a spell to win them back to the Catholic Church, to weave the fibres of a conspiracy from the Orkneys to the Land's End, prepared to wait, to control herself, to hide her purpose till the moment came to strike: yet with a purpose resolutely formed to trample down the Reformation and to seat herself on Elizabeth's throne." She doubtless hoped, and perhaps believed, that Scotland would return to the old faith. But she was far more concerned with her own throne than with her people's faith. She was determined to maintain her personal authority. She was eager for an understanding with Elizabeth which might secure her rights as the English Queen's heiress, and she hoped for a brilliant Spanish marriage that would once more give her a position as a European personality. Of all these things the young Queen dreamed after her long and trying days with dour Reformers and obstinate nobles. The suggestion that she was nothing but a subtle agent of Rome is a sheer absurdity.

Her first four years in Scotland were full of anxiety and intrigue, but she probably enjoyed the intrigue, and young, healthy, and ambitious, the great game that she was playing could not have been without its thrills. The Italian, Riccio, came to Scotland soon after his mistress, in the train of the Piedmontese Ambassador, and his art brought into the dull, cold rooms of her Scottish castles some of the charm of Paris and the Louvre. Moreover, despite her religion, Mary's popularity steadily increased, to the sorrow and astonishment of the preachers, who declared that she possessed "some enchantment whereby men are bewildered." Her brother, Lord James Stuart, now become the Earl of Moray, and Maitland of Lexington were her two chief advisers. Her brother was unreliable, but Maitland was an extremely astute politician and a genuine patriot, who resembled Elizabeth in caring a great deal more for his country than for the Reformed faith. Though Mary was properly influenced by Maitland, she made her own decisions, and acted with courage and resolution. And her common sense was most conspicuous, perhaps,

in preventing Catholic agitation, doomed to failure from the beginning, and in declining to be beguiled by foreign pressure into futile attempts to force her country back to Rome.

Bothwell was detested by Moray and by every other reputable person in Scotland, and he and the Queen rarely met until 1565. These years were spent by Bothwell in lawless turbulence. At the end of 1561 he was ordered to leave Edinburgh, and in the next year he was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle on the charge of plotting to seize the Queen's person. At the end of the year, having escaped from prison, he was arrested at Berwick while on his way to France, and sent by Elizabeth to the Tower, and in 1565, after a short stay in Scotland, he was again in exile in France.

Mary had two dangerous enemies—the irrepressible Knox and the capricious Elizabeth. Knox continued his denunciations, which ever grew more vulgar and unrestrained. He had no hope, he declared, that the Queen "will ever come to God or do good to the Commonwealth." Elizabeth played with Mary as she played with Catherine de

Medici and with Philip of Spain. Mary was anxious for a personal meeting with her cousin, and it was constantly arranged and as constantly postponed. Elizabeth talked of marriage and never intended to marry. Mary was eager to marry again as a sovereign, but far more as a woman, and the husband for whom she yearned was Don Carlos of Spain. This marriage was now prevented by the influence of her uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine, who had first suggested it but who was convinced that the interests of the Guise family would be best served by an Austrian alliance, and the Cardinal was supported by the Pope. When Elizabeth suggested that Mary should marry Leicester, it was, as has been said, as if one king should suggest to another king that he should take his cast-off mistress.

Sorrow came to Mary with the assassination of her favourite uncle, the Duc de Guise, and with the growing feeling that her interests and the interests of her mother's family were no longer the same. But she remained bold of heart and gay of spirit. "I assure your honour," Randolph, the British Ambassador in Edinburgh, wrote to Cecil, "I

never saw her merrier, never dismayed, nor never thought that stomach to be in her that I find."

On 29th July, 1565, Mary, despairing of a more desirable bridegroom, was married to Darnley in the Chapel Royal of Holyrood Palace. The marriage was approved by France and Spain, strongly disapproved by Elizabeth, since it strengthened Mary's claim to the English crown, and bitterly opposed by Moray and the extreme Protestants, since Darnley, like Mary, was a Roman Catholic. He was a boy of twenty, cultured, well built, attractive in appearance, but without brains or morals. Mary did not wait for the Pope's approval, but when it came, two months after her marriage, it lacked nothing in cordiality.

There is no office or fatherly love so great which both of you may not expect and promise yourselves from Us, [wrote Pius IV]. Only retain constantly and increase, as We trust in the Lord that you will, your pious affection to the Catholic religion, and do your best to restore the light of faith in your kingdom by dispelling the darkness of heresy. Hold it for certain, that the more you defend the honour of God with zeal and activity the more felicitous and glorious will be your

reign. His protection has never been wanting to pious and Catholic princes.

Moray was now in open rebellion, and after the Darnley marriage there was a definite fear of an English invasion, but Elizabeth, never inclined to support rebellious subjects, wrote in her usual non-committal way to the Lords of the Congregation, and Mary turned for help to Philip of Spain. Meanwhile Mary made the first of her fatal blunders. Within a few days of her marriage she had discovered the worthlessness of her husband, and, now, that she was deserted by her half-brother, and feeling the necessity to have a strong and not too scrupulous man by her side, she sent for Bothwell. Towards the end of 1565 he was appointed Lieutenant of the Marches, and used his authority on the border, not to suppress, but to exploit brigandage. Early in 1566, Mary found a bride for Bothwell in Jane Gordon, daughter of the Earl of Huntly, though he had already entered into several more or less doubtful marriages. Despite this arrangement, it is clear that Mary had already fallen in love with this "glorious, rash, and hazardous

young man." She was sick and tired of Darnley, a jealous, incompetent profligate, and Bothwell, with his masterfulness and his fearlessness and his swagger, was a most appealing and attractive contrast. There is nothing good to be said of Bothwell. He was a high-born, reckless criminal. But beauty has often fallen in love with the beast.

In March 1566, Riccio, Mary's Italian secretary, was murdered by Darnley's orders, he having "a vehement suspicion of David that by him something was committed which was most against the Queen's honour." A vivid account of the murder was written by Mary in a letter to the Archbishop of Glasgow. Its brutality is the more apparent when it is remembered that it took place two months before the birth of the Queen's son. She wrote: "The Lord Ruthven, armed in like manner, with his accomplices, took entry perforce in our cabinet, and there seeing our secretary, David Riccio, among our other servants, declared he had to speak with him. In this instant, we required the King our husband if he knew anything of that enterprise, who denied the same. Also, we commanded

the Lord Ruthven, under the pain of treason, to avoid him forth of our presence; he (Riccio) then for refuge took safeguard (having retired him behind our back), but Ruthven, with his accomplices, cast down our table upon ourself, put violent hands on him, struck him over our shoulder with hangers, one part of them standing before our face with bended dags (cocked pistols), most cruelly took him out of our cabinet, and at the entry of our chamber gave him fifty-six strokes with whinyards and swords. In doing whereof we were not only struck with great dread, but also, by sundry considerations, were most justly induced to take extreme fear of our life."

Mr. John Drinkwater makes the Queen exclaim after the assassination, "A fantastic nothing. Poor fellow! But the reckoning shall be as though for a great lover." After an outburst of grief, she wiped her eyes and said, "No more tears. I will think upon revenge." Before the Riccio murder, Mary had a contemptuous dislike for Darnley, but, the moment she saw her secretary lying dead, she conceived a blind, reckless hatred for him which had to be satis-

fied at all costs. Elizabeth sympathised with her. She told the Spanish Ambassador in London that had she been in Mary's place on the night of Riccio's murder, "she would have taken her husband's dagger and stabbed him with it." And she probably would.

Mary's son, to be James I of England, was born on 19th June. An outward peace had been patched up between Mary and Darnley, and in the following months she behaved with conspicuous hypocrisy, seeing little of her husband, but pretending that she had forgiven though she never could forget. Bothwell, "the most hated man among the noblemen of Scotland," had become the principal personage in her Court, and, while the evidence against her is vindictive and exaggerated, it seems almost certain that in the autumn she was Bothwell's mistress. He was dangerously wounded in a border affray—Sir Walter Scott has said it was a grievous misfortune for Mary that he did not die—and she rode sixty miles in a day to visit him, but she rode with a large suite, and her brother was in her train. In October the Queen herself was very

ill, and at one time not expected to recover. Moray, indeed, began to appropriate her jewelry, and the Court ladies had ordered their mourning. They had reckoned without her youth and stubborn constitution. Towards the end of the year she was talking of divorce, and, with her clear judgment swamped by her passion, she seems at last to have consented to the killing of Darnley, which seemed to Bothwell the natural and appropriate way of ridding himself of a troublesome rival.

There is still reasonable doubt whether Mary was actually privy to the murder of Darnley in Kirk o' Field, and the casket letters, the principal evidence against her, are probably forgeries. But all Scotland knew that Bothwell was Darnley's murderer, and bills were posted on the walls in Edinburgh denouncing him for the crime. He met these attacks by riding through the streets with a body-guard of five hundred desperadoes, and declaring that "if he knew who were the setters up of the bills he would wash his hands in their blood." Mary does not seem at first to have been suspected, and there is no suggestion that she had

any hand in the crime in the letter written to her by Elizabeth on 24th February. Mary went into conventional mourning, but she took no real measure to punish the murderer, and there were soon whispers of her guilt, not only in Scotland, but in London and Paris. Catherine de Medici "wrote very severely to the Queen affirming if she performed not the promise to have the death of the King avenged to clear herself, they would not only think her dishonoured, but would be her enemies." And the Scottish Minister in Paris reported that "yourself is greatly and wrongfully calumniated to be the motive principal of the whole of all, and all done by your command." Mary was utterly reckless, and did everything possible to confirm suspicion. She gave Bothwell grants of money, and, it is even said, presented him with Darnley's horses and armour, and less than two months after the murder it was reported to Elizabeth that Mary intended to marry her second husband's murderer. As a politician Elizabeth must have welcomed a marriage that would render her rival impotent. But she was a staunch trade unionist. Sovereign must

stand by sovereign. And a queen must be saved from folly calculated to encourage rebellion and to damage royal prestige. She wrote to Mary on 8th April:

> For the love of God, Madame, use such sincerity and prudence in this matter, which touches you so nearly, that all the world may feel justified in believing you innocent of so enormous a crime, which, if you were not, would be good cause for degrading you from the rank of princess, and bringing upon you the scorn of the vulgar. Sooner than that this should befall you, I would wish you an honourable grave, rather than a dishonoured life.

Bothwell was formally charged with Darnley's murder, but no accusers or witnesses dared to appear against him, and he was unanimously acquitted. At the end of April, while Mary was riding from Stirling to Edinburgh with a small escort, she was captured by Bothwell and carried to Dunbar Castle. Considering the relations that existed between them, the whole thing was obviously arranged, and the abduction was "with the Queen's own consent." The pretence was that she was compelled to marry Bothwell "seeing that he had

ravished her and lain with her against her will." On 7th May, Bothwell was divorced from his wife. On 12th May he was created Duke of Orkney, and on 15th May, Mary and he were married by a Protestant bishop. The marriage was the culminating blunder. Mary might have played a guilty part in the killing of Darnley, and might have retained Bothwell as her lover, and still have kept her throne. But the marriage was an outrage to Protestants and Catholics alike, and made Mary an outlaw among the princes of Europe. Her confessor, a French Dominican, promptly left her, and the Pope, hitherto her steady friend, solemnly and formally washed his hands of her and her affairs. The Cardinal of Alessandria wrote:

> With regard to the Queen of Scots, it is not the Pope's intention to have any further communication with her unless indeed in times to come he shall see some better sign of her life and religion than he has witnessed in the past.

Elizabeth realised that Mary's disgrace was a crushing blow to the Catholic cause in England, but, on the other hand, she regarded with appre-

hension the revolutionary movement against the Queen of Scotland which might well cross the border and threaten the safety of the Queen of England. Mary's position, indeed, soon grew intolerable. Throgmorton reported to Elizabeth:

> It is a public speech amongst all the people and amongst all estates saving the Counsellors that their Queen hath no more liberty nor privilege to commit murder nor adultery than any other private person, neither by God's law nor by the laws of the realm.

In June, Mary and Bothwell fled from Edinburgh to Borthwick Castle, against which the nobles allied against them marched with an army a thousand strong. Mary, "in men's clothes, booted and spurred," escaped with Bothwell to Dunbar, where she was captured and imprisoned at Lochleven. The end had come with dramatic quickness. For fifteen days the Queen remained stunned and silent. Elizabeth was disturbed by the imprisonment. Queens must not be imprisoned, whatever their offences, and she informed Throgmorton of her intention to do everything possible to enable Mary "to recover her liberty and not suffer her

being by God's ordinance the prince and sovereign to be in subjection to them that by nature and law are subjected to her." But the Scottish Lords feared the people. Knox had again become vociferous, "threatening the great plague of God to the whole country and nation if she be spared from her condign punishment." Mary was compelled to sign a deed of abdication, protesting vigorously that she would respect the deed only so long as she remained in captivity. She was taken from one prison to another. She wrote appeal after appeal to Elizabeth and to Catherine de Medici, and in May 1568 she contrived to escape after an imprisonment of ten months. She issued a violent proclamation in which she referred to her brother Moray as "that beastly traitor," and six thousand clansmen gathered to her standard. Her forces, however, were hopelessly beaten, and she was compelled to cross the Solway to England on 16th May.

When he fled from Dunbar, Bothwell made his way first to the Orkneys and then to Denmark, where he arrived at the end of September. The Scottish authorities demanded his extradition, but

the King of Denmark preferred to remain the swashbuckler's gaoler. He was only thirty-one when his career came to an end, and for twelve years this active, full-blooded desperado was kept under lock and key. Finally he lost his reason, and died in a remote castle in Zealand in 1578, eight years before Mary's execution. Bothwell had a certain capacity, but he was a man without even an approximation to a scruple, a man who was never able to consider the consequences of any of his actions. He was enough of a politician to have known the certain results of his marriage with Mary, but that did not cause him to hesitate. She was an attractive woman and a queen, and he meant to possess her whatever might be the price. After her fall, it was out of his power to help her. The story that he made a death-bed confession in which he declared that he alone was responsible for Darnley's death is not true. There is not one good thing to be said of James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell.

Mary landed on the shores of Cumberland on Sunday, 16th May, 1568. Before crossing the

Solway Firth, she had written to Elizabeth protesting that "next to God I have no hope but in your goodness." She had been urged by her friends to escape to France, but her pride prevented her from returning "with the equipage of an exile or fugitive where she had formerly appeared in so much glory and splendour." Immediately on arriving in England, Mary wrote again to Elizabeth begging for her bounty, "for I am in a pitiable condition, not only for a queen, but for a gentlewoman."

So long as Mary remained in Scotland, Elizabeth was ready enough to promise to aid her to recover her throne. But her cousin in England was a serious perplexity. Fear of the increasing power of English Protestantism prevented Elizabeth from receiving her as a reigning queen. To refuse to receive her would condone rebellion. In addition, Mary in England was a certain focus for Catholic disaffection. Catherine de Medici thoroughly appreciated, and, as it would seem, enjoyed the situation. In a letter to Elizabeth she expressed her fear "that you will not remember sufficiently that you have

often been unjust towards this Queen, my daughter-in-law, and how this is the case that touches all princes." As usual, Elizabeth hesitated and compromised. Mary was housed in Carlisle Castle, where Sir Francis Knollys, Elizabeth's Vice-Chamberlain, brought her a message from the Queen condoling with her on her misfortunes. Knollys reported to Cecil:

This lady and princess is a notable woman. She seemeth to regard no ceremonious honour beside acknowledging of her estate regal. She showeth a disposition to speak much, to be bold, to be pleasant, and to be very familiar. She showeth a great desire to be avenged of her enemies; she showeth a readiness to expose herself to all perils in hope of victory; she delighteth much to hear of hardiness and valiance, commending by name all approved hardy men of her country, although they be her enemies; and she commendeth no cowardice even in her friends. The thing that most she thirsteth after is victory, and it seemeth to be indifferent to her to have her enemies diminish, either by the sword of her friends, or by the liberal promises and rewards of her purse, or by division and quarrels raised among themselves; so that, for victory's sake, pain and perils seem pleasant unto her, and in respect of victory, wealth and all things seem to her contemptuous and vile.

The report that Mary was still determined to assert her rights, and that there was no prospect of her being a reasonable and placid exile, added to the misgivings in London. Cecil was urging his mistress to throw in her lot with the continental Protestants, to send troops to aid the Dutch against Alva, and now to deport Mary back to Scotland. But Elizabeth refused. She refused either to see Mary or to pledge the support which was asked and apparently rather foolishly expected, and, by 21st June, Mary at last lost heart. She wrote to her uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine:

> If you have not pity on me now, it is all over with my son, my country, and myself. I have endured injuries, she went on, calumnies, imprisonment, famine, cold, heat, flight—not knowing whither, ninety-two miles across the country without stopping or alighting—and then I have had to sleep upon the ground, and drink sour milk, and eat oatmeal without bread, and have been three nights like the owls, without a female in this country, where, to crown all, I am little else than a prisoner.

The policy of the English Court was to make Mary innocuous, to prevent her from being accepted

by the Catholics as their leader. She had already dimmed her fame by the marriage with Bothwell, which to the Catholic was no marriage at all, and it was believed that, if she could be proved guilty of being an accomplice in the murder of Darnley, her reputation would be so tarnished that she could no longer become a dangerous claimant to the English throne. Elizabeth therefore declared that it was impossible for her to receive Mary until her innocence had been established, and a commission was appointed to sit at York to examine the evidence, and particularly the famous casket letters, which, if they were genuine, established Mary's guilt beyond all question. The Duke of Norfolk was the chief Commissioner, and Moray, Mary's half-brother, was her chief accuser. The finding of the commission was indefinite, but its purpose was achieved and Mary's reputation plentifully besmirched.

But Elizabeth overplayed her part, as she often did. The humiliations imposed on her cousin, and the persecution to which she was subjected, won back the Catholic sympathy that the Bothwell mar-

riage had lost, and Mary, now realising Elizabeth's purpose and appreciating the fact that she had at least one more card to play, emphasised her position as a Catholic martyr. In this she was by no means entirely insincere. The Bothwell episode had been a sad falling from grace. She had sacrificed for a wild passion not only her throne but her religion. But remorse was natural and repentance was probably not unreal.

Norfolk, the chief of her judges, fell in love with her, and was ready to turn Catholic if she would marry him. But Norfolk was weak and timorous. With a curious ignorance of the character of Elizabeth, he thought everything might be gained by negotiation, and was fearful of rebellion, and the Catholic Lords, wearying of his hesitation, rose on their own account, headed by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland. But the Catholics generally stood aloof, partly from fear, partly perhaps because of Mary's past, and the rebellion was easily suppressed, with the usual consequence of wholesale hangings.

In 1570, Pope Pius V issued the Bull excom-

municating Elizabeth. In 1571, Roman Catholics for the first time ceased to worship with their fellow-countrymen. In 1572 the massacre of St. Bartholomew sent a shudder of horror through Europe. Mary, of course, had nothing whatever to do with the massacre, but it had been contrived by her cousins, the Guises, and English Protestantism, which had grown stronger and more fanatical, held her at least partially responsible for the death of their fellow-religionists. On the other hand, plot followed plot for the release of Mary, though some of them were so entirely idiotic that it is impossible not to suspect the work of the *agent provocateur*.

Rome declared the marriage with Bothwell void, and this cleared the way for a marriage with Norfolk, but the one result of the proposal was that the duke lost his head on Tower Hill. Meanwhile Mary's brother, Moray, had been assassinated, but any hope that she might have had of returning to Scotland soon proved groundless. She was cut off from her son. The foolish plottings with Spain and France always ended in nothing. The Queen's years were filled with great expectations and

grievous disappointments. That she was privy to certain plots against Elizabeth's life is probably true. She had come to hate her cousin, and not without cause, and she was not the woman to be particular as to the means to gain her end. In these plots she was constantly the victim of fools and traitors. Her imprisonment grew steadily more rigorous. In 1585, Sir Amyas Powlett, and honest, stern, and fanatical Puritan, was appointed her gaoler. The Babington plot, which was the excuse for her execution, was quite certainly contrived with the knowledge of Walsingham, and, to a large extent, on the suggestion of his agents. Babington himself was a coward and a fool. He had been one of Mary's pages when she was first imprisoned in England, and he had worked out an absurd plan for the murder of Elizabeth and the liberation of Mary. He entered into a long correspondence with the imprisoned Queen, which was, of course, intercepted, and the wretched creature betrayed his associates when he was arrested. It was the culminating tragedy of Mary's life that so astute a woman should in her despair have been the ac-

complice, as she undoubtedly was, in a plot of almost inconceivable puerility.

The occasion had been acutely manœuvred. When the details of the plot were made known, an association for Elizabeth's safety was solemnly formed and confirmed by Act of Parliament, and the Queen issued a commission to the Privy Council in which she said that "divers matters have been compassed and imagined to the hurt of our royal person, as well by Mary daughter and heir of James 5th King of Scots and commonly called Queen of Scots and dowager of France, pretending title to the crown of this realm of England." And the Council was ordered "to examine all and singular matters compassed and imagined tending to the hurt of our royal person as well by the aforesaid Mary as by any other person or persons whatsoever with the privity of the same Mary."

Mary's trial at Fotheringay Castle was clearly illegal. She was a sovereign princess, and certainly not an English subject. The trial was without precedent, and was permitted by Elizabeth with great

misgivings. She was thoroughly aware that the trial, and the execution for which it was only intended as a preliminary, would assuredly win back for Mary all the sympathy that she had lost, and would array against England the Catholic alliance which Elizabeth had always feared. As a matter of fact, the execution at Fotheringay Castle in 1587 was followed by the sailing of the Armada in 1588. The proceedings of the trial have been carefully edited by Mr. Francis Steuart in a volume of great historical interest. Mary behaved with great dignity, unfailing courage, and remarkable astuteness. She spoke English badly. She was allowed no counsel, and, while she steadily denied the right of the court to try her, she never lost her temper, trying as the circumstances were. She was, of course, found guilty, and Parliament at once petitioned the Queen to consent to her execution. Again Elizabeth hesitated. She had attempted to arrange a secret poisoning, which would have been far less troublesome. But she was now politically dependent on the Protestants, and Protestant sentiment demanded the taking of the Scottish Queen's

life, and Elizabeth gave a half consent which she afterwards attempted to withdraw.

Mary was beheaded on the 8th February, dying with splendid dignity and calm piety. "I die," she said, "constant in my religion and firm in my fidelity and affection towards Scotland and France." She was meanly denied for a time the consolations of her religion. She was compelled to listen to an impertinent sermon from the Dean of Peterborough, and then she died as a royal lady should die. "And when her women had taken off her upper garments (which she was eager and hasty to have done), wailing and lamenting the while, she kissed them, and, signing them with the Cross, with a cheerful countenance bid them forbear their womanish lamentations, for now she would rest from all her sorrows. In like manner turning to her menservants, who also wept, she signed them with the Cross, and, smiling, bade them farewell. And now, having covered her face with a linen handkerchief, and laying herself down to the block, she recited the Psalm, 'In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be confounded.' Then,

stretching forth her body and repeating many times, 'Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit,' her head was taken off at two strokes. The Dean crying out, 'So let Queen Elizabeth's enemies perish,' the Earl of Kent answering, 'Amen,' and the multitude sighing and sorrowing."

Her death made it appear that Mary Stuart died a martyr to the Catholic faith. In fact, complex, accomplished, unhappy lady that she was, she was the victim of an overmastering and lustful passion.

HENRIETTA MARIA

HENRIETTA MARIA

1609–1669

HENRIETTA MARIA

HER grief made her learned in the science of salvation and the efficacy of the Cross," said the great French preacher, Bossuet, in his sermon at the funeral of Queen Henrietta Maria, widow of the martyred king, Charles I.

It has happened rarely that a place in history has been gained from a funeral oration. But the chief distinction of Henrietta Maria and of her daughter, Henrietta, Duchess of Orléans, lies in the fact that they were two of the subjects of Bossuet's *Oraisons Funébres,* and even the great Condé seems greater after reading the famous preacher's *post-mortem* eulogy. Bossuet was one of the outstanding figures of the France of the seventeenth century. He not only preached the sermons at the funerals of the King's aunt and of his perhaps rather too well loved sister-in-law, but it was through him that the King's first and infinitely most attractive favourite escaped from the Court to

the peace of the convent cell. The preacher at a royal funeral can hardly be expected to be over-critical in his judgment, but Henrietta Maria deserved most of the things that Bossuet said of her, and few royal ladies have ever more fully earned the title of *la reine malheureuse*.

Henrietta Maria was born on 25th November, 1609. She was the youngest child of Henry IV of France, the gallant, astute Henry of Navarre, who, born the champion of French Protestantism, secured the crown for the Bourborn family and incidentally assured national unity by adherence to the national religion. Henry's first wife was Marguerite of Valois, the fascinating, talented and most unmoral daughter of Catherine de Medici. After his divorce from Marguerite, Henry married Maria de Medici, one of the family of the great Florentine bankers, in the hope of substantial help from the Medici coffers. Maria was a fat, self-indulgent, and obstinate fool. The French historian, Michelet, describes her as "a large gross woman with round fixed eyes," and the only good thing remembered of her is that

she had a hand in laying out the Champs Elysées in Paris.

Henry IV died six months after Henrietta Maria's birth, and the princess's early childhood was spent in the Château of St. Germain-en-Laye, where her descendents, the exiled Stuarts, were to spend sad years, always and vainly hoping for a return to Whitehall.

After her husband's death, and during the minority of her son, Louis XIII, Maria de Medici was Queen Regent, swayed by venal Italian favourites and wasting the State's resources in fatal and fantastic extravagance, with the result that immediately her son attained his majority his mother was compelled to leave Paris and to live at Blois with her youngest daughter. It was about this time in her life that Henrietta met St. Francis de Sales, the great Bishop of Geneva, and today, by the fiat of the Pope, the patron saint of journalists. She was present at the wedding of an elder sister with the Duke of Savoy, and St. Francis warned the child not to be too intent on the pomps and vanities of this world, but to seek for herself a more solid glory.

She must often have recalled the advice in the drab years of her widowhood.

In 1623, Prince Charles of England was at the French Court with his favourite Buckingham, who fell madly in love with Henrietta's sister-in-law, Queen Anne of Austria, with results told, more or less accurately, in *The Three Musketeers*. Two years later, Henrietta was married in Paris by proxy to Charles, who had succeeded his father as king a few months before. She was escorted to the coast by her mother and her sister-in-law. They were met half-way by Buckingham, who contrived at Amiens to have a secret interview, in compromising circumstances, with Anne of Austria. This romantic episode, for which the Queen had not the smallest responsibility, even though it may not have been without its thrills for her, was afterwards used persistently against her by Cardinal Richelieu. Buckingham was forbidden ever again to set foot in France, but his crazy love for the Queen induced him to involve England in an alliance with the Huguenots in the hope that he might march triumphantly into the French capital. All that actually

happened was the costly and futile operations with the Protestants of Rochelle.

Henrietta Maria's first years in England were very unhappy. She was wilful and headstrong, and she was a devout Catholic living among a people ever growing more and more definitely Protestant and Puritan. The marriage treaty provided that she should have her own chaplains and her own Catholic chapel, but the presence of foreign monks in London was a constant irritant which added to the rising revolutionary sentiment, and Henrietta knew nothing of tact or diplomacy.

Charles had inherited the traditional fear of Spain and the Cecil policy of endeavouring to unite the Protestant forces of Europe. He realised, however, that they could never be strong enough to oppose the united power of Spain and the Empire unless they could enlist the assistance of France, and it was with this object that the marriage with the French princess was contracted. But opinions had changed in England since the days of Elizabeth and the Armada. To the English of the middle Elizabethan period Spain and Romanist were inter-

changeable terms, and the hatred of the Pope was, in effect, the hatred of the King of Spain. Originally English Protestantism was far more nationalist than religious, but it had grown more religious with the seventeenth century. To the Puritans of King Charles's Parliaments a Romanist was a Romanist, whatever were his race and nationality, and the French Princess was viewed with exactly the same suspicion as she would have suffered had she been Spanish. Charles was willing to purchase French friendship by a relaxation of the laws against Romanists, and that might have been possible if the French King had been ready to offer similar toleration to the Huguenots. But the French would agree to no such bargain, and the English Parliament, as Mr. A. S. Duncan Jones has said, had Roman Catholicism on the brain in 1625, as it appeared to have it on the brain in 1928.

Charles I detested the religion of the Puritans quite as heartily as he detested their politics, but he was a faithful son of the English Church. Both he and his mentor, Archbishop Laud, anticipated the modern Anglo-Catholics in their faith and in

their view of the nature of the Church. But both of them were as anti-papal as Henry VIII himself. Laud declared that the Papist was the most dangerous subject in the kingdom. King Charles favoured religious toleration for foreigners in England, but for them only. For his subjects he said: "I will have them live in the religion I profess and my father before me."

Laud's position was almost exactly that of the early Tractarians and of Dr. Gore to-day. He was emphatic in his condemnation of what he called the worship of images and of refusing the cup to the laity. He was Protestant in his declaration that Holy Scripture is the one infallible authority, though, in opposition to the sectaries, he believed that the teaching of Holy Scripture is enshrined in the Creeds. He did not deny that the pre-Reformation Church was the true Church, but he declared that it was corrupted and tainted, and that, at its beginning, Protestantism was really a protest against gross corruption. "The Protestants," he said, "have not left the Church of Rome in her essence, but in her errors: not in the things which

constitute a Church, but only in such abuses and corruptions as work towards the dissolution of a Church." He rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation and the invocation of the saints. He declared that the Roman practice was pagan, and although he held the doctrine of the Real Presence, so did the Lutherans. The attitude of Laud and his master, whose opinions may be presumed to have been identical with his own, is shown by the fact that by a direct order of the King the publication of *An Introduction to a Devout Life,* by St. Francis de Sales, was forbidden in England.

Quite naturally, and for many reasons, Henrietta Maria was eager to re-establish relations between the Vatican and the English Court, and she was unable to understand why her husband, who accepted so much of what the Catholic Church taught, and who was separated by a great gulf from the Protestant Puritans in the House of Commons, refused to submit to the head of what was to her the one Catholic Church. It is difficult to determine how far she influenced, or attempted to influence, her husband in his relations with Parliament, but

she was certainly partially responsible for the series of disasters that ended with the beheading of the King in Whitehall.

After their marriage and after the death of Buckingham, a deep and real love sprang up between the royal pair. Charles was clean living, uxorious, and domestic, and Henrietta conceived a passionate affection for her romantic husband. But if he was an easy-going husband, she was a mischievous wife. Apart from the difficulties caused by her religion, she was sufficiently extravagant, and, as in the case of Marie Antoinette, royal extravagance at a time of national hardship and difficulty helped to undermine the stability of the throne. The Queen's Christmas masque cost two thousand pounds. Another two thousand was spent on the nursery furniture when she was expecting the birth of her second daughter. A poulterer was owed one thousand nine hundred; a jeweller was owed two thousand five hundred; and so on. These sums were cited against the royal family when the Puritans were resisting the imposition of Ship Money and demanding that there should

be no taxation without the consent of Parliament.

In the years that preceded the Civil War, the troubles of the royal family were accentuated by a long visit from Maria de Medici, again sent into exile by her son, and by the presence in London of the intriguing Duchess de Chevreuse, another of the protagonists of the Dumas drama, a lady with a genius for fomenting trouble, who was to play a great part in the tragi-comedy of the Fronde. Charles granted his mother-in-law an allowance of £100 a day, which seems sufficiently generous, and the Duchesse de Chevreuse cost him another two hundred guineas a week; and, considering the condition of the royal treasury, his wife's friends and relations were for him decidedly expensive luxuries.

There is no question that Charles to a considerable extent worked his own undoing by his vacillation, by facing both ways, and by his constant inability to make up his mind. Henrietta chafed at the vacillation, and she always urged a sternness and a refusal to compromise which would certainly

not have been effectual in the England of the years before the Civil War. She became more and more an object of public hatred, until she was finally impeached in the House of Commons. "For my part," said one of the Members during the heated debate, "I desire to speak plain English. I think that the principal Papist now in arms against us is the Queen." On 16th June, 1644, a fortnight before the battle of Marston Moor, Henrietta's youngest child, the Princess Henrietta, was born at Exeter, and the advance of the successful Parliamentary army caused the Queen a month later to leave her baby behind and to flee to France, where she landed unheralded and unexpected, "more like a miserable heroine of romance than a true queen," nineteen years after she had left her home to marry the English king.

Richelieu had died in 1642, Louis XIII had died in 1643, and in 1644 France was ruled by Anne of Austria, Regent for her son, Louis XIV, and by the Italian, Cardinal Mazarin. Anne of Austria, the kindest-hearted of women, received her sister-in-law with affection, and a lodging was given her in

the Louvre, where she was soon joined by her baby daughter. But the times were hard, and Mazarin was all-powerful and mean, and kings and queens in exile are always a nuisance. Though Henrietta and the little princess had lodgings in a palace, they knew little of comfort and nothing of luxury. When Cardinal de Retz, Mazarin's rival, visited them in 1649, he was received in the princess's bedroom, where she was still in bed. "You see, I am here to keep Henrietta company," said the Queen; "the child could not get up to-day, for we have no fire." The pension promised by Mazarin had not been paid for six months, no further credit could be obtained, and the Queen had not enough money to buy a bundle of firewood. Afterwards very generous provision was made for Henrietta, the Paris Parliament making her a grant of forty thousand livres.

Charles was beheaded in 1649. His widow was barely forty, and for a while she was stunned and paralysed by her sorrow. But she was not the daughter of Henry IV for nothing. King Charles was dead. His sons were in exile, but their rights

might be recovered, and she at once gave her mind, though not very astutely and not at all successfully, to ensure the return of the royal family to London. She had the goodwill of the French King, and she intrigued to obtain the support of the Pope, but there was never any real understanding between the Queen and her eldest son. Charles was a realist. No man could have more bitterly resented the sordid humiliation of his exile days in Holland and in France. No man could have been more eager to return to England. But he knew quite well that the one thing which would almost certainly ensure perpetual exile would be the knowledge in England that he had the backing of the Pope. He was emphatic in the assertion that he was a good Protestant—London was worth the repudiation of the Mass—and he attacked his mother for bringing up his youngest sister in the Catholic faith. Between them there was no sympathy, and apparently no affection. When the Restoration occurred in 1660, Henrietta might thank God for the miracle that He had performed, and she might now hope before she died "to see all my family, no longer vagabonds,

once more together," but she had no personal responsibility for her son's return, nor was she invited to share his triumph.

In 1661, the Princess Henrietta was married to Philippe d'Orléans, the unspeakably unpleasant brother of Louis XIV; and in 1662 the Queen Dowager went back to England. She lived in the palace at Greenwich, where young Monmouth was among her pages. She was delighted with her daugher-in-law, Catherine of Braganza, perhaps the most neglected of all queens, of whom little is remembered except that she brought Bombay as her dowry to the British Crown. Trouble had softened Henrietta. She desired now to live quietly and without offence, but she soon found the atmosphere of her son's Court insufferable. She resented his innumerable mistresses, and she found the anti-French sentiment hard to endure. The climate made her ill, and she went back to France. As Pepys records, "she being in a consumption and intended not to come home till winter come twelve months." As a matter of fact, she never came home at all.

For a year longer she lived in France. She was saddened by news from the English Court, but her daughter was affectionate and frequently with her in her last days, and she found consolation in the reading of Thomas à Kempis. Her end was hastened, so it is said, by a blunder of her physician, Vallot. Her father had been murdered, her husband had been beheaded, and, to quote a contemporary,

> Et maintenant meurt Henriette
> Par l'ignorance de Vallot.

Madame, her beloved daughter, died of peritonitis shortly after her mother. It was said of this fascinating princess: "One would think she was asking for one's heart however indifferent the words she spoke. When anybody looked at her and she noticed it, it was impossible to believe that she had any other desire than to be pleasant in the sight of him who was gazing upon her."

QUEEN CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

QUEEN CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

1626–1689

QUEEN CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

THE Peace of Westphalia, which at long last brought the insensate folly of the Thirty Years' War to an end, was almost entirely due to the persistence and the statesmanship of a girl of twenty-two—Queen Christina of Sweden, who succeeded her father, the great Gustavus Adolphus, when she was six, and who, wearying of kingship and the folly of men, laid aside her sceptre and descended from her throne in a voluntary abdication when she was twenty-eight.

Since the days of Diocletian, many monarchs have been killed and many have been assassinated, but few have voluntarily abdicated. Richard II of England read an act of resignation with, so it is said, "a complacent countenance," but he, poor weakling, was compelled to the act by the masterful Bolingbroke—perhaps in his halting, artist way half enjoying the dramatic ceremony of handing over his ring to his conqueror. And Richard is the

only king of England who can even be pretended to have abdicated.

The sour, unhappy Louis Napoleon was glad enough to cease to be King of Holland, but his abdication would have been demanded if it had not been offered. His successor, William Frederick of Orange, abdicated at the age of sixty-eight because he had fallen in love with a lady who was a Roman Catholic and poor. But the poverty mattered very little to William Frederick, since he had amassed a considerable fortune, on which he and his wife lived in dignified retirement in Liège for three happy years. The world laughed at William Frederick, and perhaps it is true that *les rois ne peuvent être longtemps amoureux sans faire beaucoup de sottises*. But the elderly lover was far happier and more content in Liège than he would have been in Brussels or the Hague.

Charles V, German Emperor, and King of Spain, one of the great figures of the sixteenth century, resigned the empire to his brother, and Spain, the Netherlands, and the South American colonies to his son Philip, the husband of Mary Tudor, after

a reign of thirty-six years. Charles was weary, disappointed, and bewildered, and was glad enough to run away from problems which he could not solve. The many years after his abdication were mainly devoted to piety and over-eating. He was, it is said, an impetuous penitent, and he certainly was an insistent glutton.

Nearly three hundred years later, in 1848, the year of revolution, Ferdinand I of Austria, an ineffective and, indeed, a half-witted sovereign, was persuaded to make way for his nephew, Francis Joseph, who reigned till the Great War. He was persuaded with difficulty, but he nevertheless declared that he abdicated from "calm and sincere conviction, unswayed by any influence whatever." He went to live in Prague, where it was said "he has more money than he ever had before, invites many ladies to dinner, and is much happier than in the olden time."

Almost the only other notable abdication was that of Victor Amadeus I of Sardinia, who reigned at the beginning of the eighteenth century. When he had put off his crown, he soon wanted to put it

on again, thanks to the complainings of his wife, with the result that his son and successor was obliged to subject his father to a not intolerable form of imprisonment.

Such of these abdications as were in any sense voluntary were those of old, worn-out men. But Christina of Sweden resigned in her youth, and when, in bringing the Thirty Years' War to an end, she had accomplished a great feat of statesmanship.

Nearly all wars have been foolish wickedness, but the Thirty Years' War was supremely foolish and supremely wicked. It is sometimes described as a war of religion, a struggle between Protestants and Catholics as to which should be dominant in Central Europe, but, as a matter of fact, religion had precious little to do with the long-drawn-out series of operations which reduced Germany to poverty and misery. Primarily the Thirty Years' War was caused by the jealousies and ambitions of the German princes, and, in its later stages, it became part of the ceaseless struggle between the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons.

In 1618, the Bohemians, rebelling against Austria's rule, chose the Elector Palatine, the son-in-law of King James I, as their king. That began the trouble. The Elector, the "Winter King," as he was called, had the shortest of stays in Prague. He was bundled out of Bohemia by the imperial troops, and as a result of his adventure he lost the Palatinate, and spent the rest of his life in exile. This was the prologue to a long-drawn-out tragedy. Armies of mercenaries, some of them recruited in England, were invited into Germany by one or other of the groups of princes, and lived on the country, with ruthless greed and cruelty. Great leaders occasionally played their part in the drama —Tilley, the cautious Imperialist; the magnificent Wallenstein, with his dream of a united Germany, obedient to the Emperor, but with a large measure of political and religious freedom; Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, the greatest soldier of them all; and in the later years Turenne and Condé. But these famous captains mattered less to the wretched people than the commanders of free companies who regularly ravaged and robbed. At the end of the

thirty years, "famine and cannibalism, plague and pestilence, ruled over Germany; the initial stages of rage and despair had long passed away, and only apathy remained to the miserable remnant of the population."

Sweden had played her part in making Germany a desert, and it was fitting that the Swedish Queen should have been the chief instrument in bringing the agony to an end. Her father, Gustavus Adolphus, fought in Germany from 1630 to 1632, when he was killed at the battle of Lutzen at the age of thirty-eight. His intervention was, he professed, occasioned by his devotion to the Protestant cause and his determination that religious freedom should not be destroyed. In his speech to the Swedish Estates before leaving the country, he said: "Seeing that many perchance may imagine that we charge ourselves with this war without cause given, so take I God the Most High to witness, in whose face I here sit, that I have undertaken it not out of my own pleasure, nor from the lust of war; but for many years have had most pressing motive thereto, mostly for that our oppressed brethren in

religion may be freed from the papal yoke, which by God's grace we hope to effect."

This protestation was not altogether insincere, but the Swedish King was a nationalist and a dynast far more than a Protestant when he led his troops into Germany. He feared Russian aggression, and security could only be attained if he controlled the north German seaports, and if the Baltic became a Swedish lake.

Before he left Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus presented Christina, his little daughter of four, to the Estates as his successor. She was his only living child, and, while she was neglected and disliked by her mother—Christina says in her *memoirs* that in her babyhood her mother used deliberately to drop her—her father loved her dearly, and she certainly inherited much of his great capacity.

She was six when her father died. Her minority came to an end when she was eighteen. Her father had left instructions that she was to be given the education of a man, and her training for the throne was hard and thorough. Christina never had any feminine tastes. "I had," she said, "an invincible

antipathy to all that women do or say." She possessed uncanny energy and extraordinary intelligence. She spent six hours in the morning and six hours in the evening at her studies. She ate little and slept little. Her leisure was spent in violent physical exercise. She spoke German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish. She read Latin with ease. She was an acute student of politics. From the time that she was fifteen she regularly attended the meetings of the Senate, and when she began her reign, this self-willed, shrewd, and eccentric young woman was determined that, whatever else might or might not happen, war in Germany must be brought to an end.

She could only have had second-hand knowledge of what was the condition of affairs in that country, but there was sufficient reason in Sweden itself for believing that peace could not be brought at too high a price. The country was ruined by taxes and conscription. The nobles were growing more and more arrogant and the peasants more and more discontented, and her political genius taught Christina that 1648 was the year in which peace at last

was possible. The rebellion of the Fronde had broken out in Paris. Mazarin's hands were sufficiently full with internal trouble. France could not, at least for a time, send armies across the German frontier or afford to subsidise German Protestants. Peace could be brought about by co-operation between France and Sweden; but, although the two powers had fought as allies, official Sweden, and particularly the veteran chancellor, Oxenstiern, had not unnaturally grown suspicious of the statecraft of Richelieu and Mazarin. But Christina was as pro-French as Frederick the Great was a hundred years later. She invited French scholars to her Court. She sent a special embassy to Paris, lavishing money on its equipment. She corresponded personally with the young French King, Louis XIV. She was undeterred by difficulties and emphatic in her determination to have her will. She had decided that the war should cease, and her masterfulness found expression in the letter that she wrote to her ambassador in the French capital:

Let not the phantasies of ambitious men turn you from your goal, unless you wish to incur my extreme

disgrace and displeasure, and stand accountable to me blushing and blanching; you may be sure that in that case no authority nor the support of great Houses shall hinder me from showing all the world the displeasure I feel at insensate procedure.

At last the Treaty of Westphalia was signed, to Christina's immense relief. She ordered *Te Deums* to be sung in the churches and public rejoicings to be organised. The treaty was the one achievement of her reign. Sweden received parts of Pomerania, several German cities, including Stettin, and representation in the Imperial Diet, together with a large war indemnity, and for a time the ambition of Gustavus Adolphus was realised and the Baltic became a Swedish inland lake. Far more important from the European point of view was the religious toleration which the treaty secured. Curiously enough, it was disliked by the very people who should have rejoiced. The Swedish Lutheran clergy denounced the treaty from their pulpits because it recognized Calvinism and was tolerant of Catholics, and Pope Innocent X issued a Bill of condemnation because certain ecclesiastical benefices had been ceded to heretics.

Christina had become a European personality, and the French Ambassador to Sweden was instructed to send a character sketch of her to the French Court. She was, he said, below the average height, with a soft, firm voice, and she combined an extreme passion for glory with love for a lofty virtue. She was devoted to duty, and "her mind, greedy on knowing all things, seeks information of all." Cold and heat were indifferent to her. "In eating she is simple, careless, and entirely without epicureanism." She never slept for more than five hours a day. She cared little about dress and ornaments. "There is nothing feminine in her but her sex," wrote the Confessor to the Spanish Ambassador. She had added to her linguistic equipment and now spoke ten languages and could read Hebrew and Arabic, and she had a strange passion for the study of the obscurer Fathers.

"She had neither the face nor the beauty nor the inclinations of her sex," wrote Mme. de Motteville. "Instead of making men die of love for her, she makes them die of shame and despair. She has no need of Ministers, as she herself, young as she

is, manages all alone." Her letters to France, written, of course, in the French language, were admired for "the graceful humour of the thoughts and the beauty of the style," and it was said, so Mme. de Motteville relates, that "the depths of science are for her what needle and distaff are for our sex."

Christina said of herself, "I was distressfully suspicious, ambitious to excess, I was hot-tempered, proud, and impatient, contemptuous and satirical." She had no women friends. She hardly spoke more than a few sentences a day to her attendants. But she attracted to Stockholm scholars from all over Europe, of whom Descartes, the friend of many princesses, who wrote of her sweetness and goodness, was the most famous.

Christina was crowned in 1650, and four years afterwards this remarkable young woman abdicated. Europe was astounded. The abdication, which was as unexpected as Elizabeth's would have been after the destruction of the Spanish Armada, or Queen Victoria's in the year of the Great Exhibition, was due to a combination of circumstances

reacting on an original and, in some respects, an abnormal character.

The internal affairs of Sweden were in a peculiarly difficult position. Christina understood the sufferings of the poor caused by the war, and she unquestionably resented the arrogance of the nobles. But she did nothing either to alleviate or to check, and her own personal extravagance stimulated discontent. She was confronted by a problem that she could not solve, and she ran away from it. Rather than confess to failure, she preferred to surrender what was becoming an untenable position, made the more tiresome by the folly and incapacity with which she was surrounded.

Moreover, she was determined never to marry. Like Elizabeth, she had a morbid horror of the action of sex. Elizabeth hated it, but, as Mr. Lytton Strachey says, "she would play with it nevertheless." The English Queen never at any time had any real intention of marrying, but she delighted in coarse philanderings, and negotiations for marriage were the trump card in her crooked diplomacy until she was an old woman. Christina was more

honest and more direct. She disliked women. All her friends were men, but from her girlhood she scorned the idea of marriage, because, perhaps, it meant reckoning herself with the sex which she despised. She would have no master. She was determined to die a free woman. But Christina realised that a childless monarch is a national nuisance. The succession remains doubtful. Dangerous ambitions are stimulated. A party among the Swedish nobles was perfectly content with a maiden Queen, and there was a suggestion that after her death an elected monarchy should be established in Sweden. But Poland was the object lesson of the futility of such a system. In abdicating, therefore, and in making way for her cousin, Prince Charles, Christina certainly acted as a patriotic Swede. It had long been supposed that she would marry her cousin, and, when she first broached the subject of abdication to the Senate, it was urged that, if she would not marry Charles, he would never marry anyone else. "But he will," said the Queen. "Love burns not for one alone. The crown is a pretty girl."

She was bewildered and disappointed. She was

overworked and ill, trusting none of her counsellors and without any real power to delegate, and she, a laughter-loving blue-stocking, had grown weary of the dull Puritan Swedes.

But, with all these motives influencing her, there was a stronger motive still which finally caused her to surrender her throne. She had always been attracted by Rome, partly, it is suggested, because of its high regard for celibacy, and at the same time she knew that a Roman Catholic sovereign was impossible in the Sweden of the middle seventeenth century. She disliked Lutheranism. As a girl she had invented a queer mystical religion of her own, and she had an ever-growing regard for the Catholic Church, with its saints and martyrs and its "admirable virgins." During a dangerous illness two years before her coronation, she had finally determined to become a Catholic, and it was this determination which caused her abdication in 1654. She would not marry. She would not remain a Protestant. She had grown tired of the cold north and yearned for the sun of the south. And so Christina ceased to be a queen.

At a stately ceremony in her capital she signed an act of abdication, and then she herself took the crown from her head, laid down the sceptre, and, standing in a simple white dress, bade her people farewell. "I thank Almighty God," she said, "who caused me to be born of a royal stock and raised me to be Queen over so large and mighty a kingdom: and for that He has granted me so uncommon a measure of success and blessing." Then she bade her cousin and successor remember his ancestors and prove worthy of their traditions. The abdication was almost immediately followed by conversion, and from that moment Christina became the hero of the Catholics and the bugbear of the Protestants.

In the seventeenth century men found no difficulty in speaking evil of dignitaries whom they disliked, and few women have been so steadily maligned and libelled. Indeed, the thirty-five years of Christina's later life were an anti-climax. She grew "very fat and round, with a double chin and a laughing air and very obliging manners." She was visited in Rome by Bishop Burnet, who wrote:

"This princess, who will always reign among those who are endowed with wit and learning, keeps up in her ante-chamber the finest Court of strangers in Rome. The civility and great diversity of matters furnished by her conversation make her among all the rare sights of Rome the rarest, not to say among all the antiquities, which is the term she made use of in doing me the honour to speak to me."

She remained a keen judge of European affairs, and, good Catholic as she had become, her tongue lost nothing of its sharpness. "The Church," she said to Burnet, "must certainly be governed by the Holy Spirit, for since I have been at Rome I have seen four Popes, and I swear not one of them had common sense." Just before her death, in Rome in 1689, she apparently repented of such harsh criticisms, and sent to the Pope asking for his forgiveness. She was buried in the Basilica of St. Peter, and, as Mr. F. W. Bain has said, it is one of the ironies of history that the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, the fierce and famous Protestant champion, should lie in the central church of Catholic Christendom.

SOPHIA, ELECTRESS OF HANOVER

SOPHIA, ELECTRESS OF HANOVER
1630–1714

SOPHIA, ELECTRESS OF HANOVER

IN the year 1618, the people of Bohemia, wearying of the tyranny of their Austrian rulers, rebelled against them and offered the crown to Frederick V, Elector Palatine. Frederick was a colourless young man, cultured as became a prince who had his capital at Heidelberg, intermittently ambitious, and a fanatical Protestant. On St. Valentine's Day, 1613, he had married the Princess Elizabeth, the only daughter of King James I of England; and Donne, eager to court royal favour, wrote the charming poem that begins:

Hail, Bishop Valentine, whose day this is:
All the air is thy diocese.
And all the chirping choristers
And other birds are thy parishoners;
Thou marriest every year
The lyric lark, and the grave whispering dove,
The sparrow that neglects his life for love,
The household bird with the red stomacher;
Thou mak'st the blackbird speed as soon
As doth the goldfinch or the halcyon;

The husband-cock looks out, and straight is sped,
And meets his wife, who brings her feather-bed;
This day more cheerfully than ever shine;
This day, which might inflame thyself, old Valentine.

James, whose head had been turned by the change from the porridge of Edinburgh to the flesh-pots of London, stimulated his son-in-law's ambition to be a king, but, with a greater foresight, Anne of Denmark, James's consort, jeered and prophesied evil.

The new King of Bohemia sat uneasily on his throne for something less than a year. His subjects, who were either Catholics or Lutherans, resented his clumsy efforts to turn them into Calvinists, for it must be remembered that in seventeenth-century Germany Calvinists and Lutherans hated each other every bit as bitterly as they both hated the adherents of the old faith. To the Imperialists and the Catholics, Frederick was a particular object of dislike, since his father was the founder of the Evangelical Union, and he had succeeded to the leadership of the more definite and determined Protestant princes. It was this fact,

indeed, that had influenced James in choosing him for a son-in-law. The *rapprochement* between France and Spain, that followed the death of Henry IV, made it appear that alliance with the German Protestants was necessary for the safety of England, and Frederick was something of a Protestant hero. He was the grandson of William the Silent and the nephew of the gallant Maurice of Orange. But heredity was of little avail to him in his few troubled months at Prague. The country was invaded by an army of Austrians and Bavarians in the late autumn of 1620, and the Bohemians were completely routed in a battle fought on the 8th November. Frederick fled from the battlefield, in his haste losing the Garter which James had bestowed on him, and a contemptuous notice was posted on the walls of Prague offering a reward for news of "a certain runaway monarch in the flower of his youth, of a complexion inclining to the florid, diminutive in stature, with a beard entirely juvenile, and eyes squinting a little."

As a result of these operations, which were the

beginning of the Thirty Years' War, Frederick lost the Palatinate as well as Bohemia, and for the rest of their lives he and his wife were numbered among the pathetic *rois en éxil.* One event of interest occurred during their stay in Prague. In December 1619 a third son was born to Elizabeth, the dashing Prince Rupert, the Cavalier hero of the English Civil War. After the flight from Prague, Elizabeth, anticipating Mrs. Micawber, declared her determination "not to desert her husband, and, if he was to perish, to perish by his side," and she retained the empty title of Queen of Bohemia until her death forty years later. That she was a lady of great charm is evident from Sir Henry Wotton's lines:

> So when my Mistress shall be seen
> In form and beauty of her mind,
> By virtue first, then choice, a Queen,
> Tell me, if she were not design'd
> Th' eclipse and glory of her kind?

Pepys was less complimentary. "She seems a very debonair but a plain lady," he said when Elizabeth arrived in England in 1660, to spend her last years in her native land. She died in Leicester

Square in 1662, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

It would be ridiculous to suggest that the family of the Elector Palatine suffered one thousandth part of the horrors endured by the peasants and the burghers of Germany in the years of fatuous tragedy that lasted until the Peace of Westphalia. They found a sheltered home in Holland, and Donne was sent on more than one mission from London to the Electress Elizabeth, whose marriage he had acclaimed. But until his death in 1632, Frederick endured one broken hope after the other. In the year before his death it seemed that he would at last recover the Palatinate from the conquering Gustavus Adolphus. But the Swedish King died, and the unfortunate people of the Palatinate passed from one tyranny to the other, the hand of the Protestant being as heavy as the hand of the Catholic.

In 1630, Sophia, the fourth of the daughters of Frederick and Elizabeth, a princess destined to play a part of unrivalled importance in the modern dynastic history of Europe, was born at the Hague.

Elizabeth was a prolific but not a particularly devoted mother. When Sophia was born she had five brothers—a sixth appeared two years later—and three sisters, and before her birth her parents had lost two sons. While she was quite a small child, her mother sent her to Leyden, because, as Sophia wrote some years later, "the sight of her monkeys and dogs was more pleasant to her than that of ours." The child was taught the strict Calvinistic faith, but her mother had a Church of England chaplain, and it was perhaps owing to his "comprehensive" influence that Sophia acquired the tolerance that was extremely convenient to seventeenth-century German princes, for whom power and dominion frequently depended on a convenient change of religion. Her father, be it said to his credit, had no such facility, for the Palatinate would have been returned to him long before his death had he consented to pay even lip homage to the Catholic Church.

In the years during which Sophia was growing into an attractive, astute, and well-educated woman, the fortunes of her brothers and sisters were varied

and often romantic. Charles Louis, the eldest surviving son, recognised by the Protestant powers as the Elector Palatine after his father's death, inherited a good deal of Frederick's dour Calvinism. He paid a visit to England in the early days of the troubles between King and Parliament, and his opinions were so much to the taste of the Puritans that, it was said, some of their leaders contemplated making him king in his uncle's place. He was at least given a considerable pension, with the Deanery of Windsor as a residence. His brother Rupert's part in the Civil War is well known, and always in close attendance on Rupert was a younger brother, Maurice, who had none of Rupert's graces and little of his talent, but who was characterised by a splendid fidelity to his brilliant brother. After the execution of Charles I, Rupert and Maurice started a career of buccaneering, in the course of which the younger brother lost his life. Rupert returned to England after the Restoration, but he was offended by the raffish Whitehall of his cousin, Charles II. He was appointed Constable of Windsor, and lived there in studious quiet until his death

in 1682. Another brother, Philip, married a wealthy Frenchwoman and turned Roman Catholic.

Sophia's eldest sister, Elizabeth, is remembered principally for her friendship with Descartes, who was in Holland from 1629 to 1649 and who dedicated to the Princess his *Principles of Philosophy*, declaring that, of all his friends, in her alone were united talents both for metaphysics and mathematics. Descartes was always a practising Catholic. It is said that the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas was the only book that he took with him from France to the Low Countries, and he considerably modified the Calvinism which the Princess Elizabeth had inherited. In 1668, she became Abbess of a Protestant convent in Westphalia, where she provided sanctuary for all sorts of religious eccentrics and where she was visited by William Penn.

The second sister, to whom was given the outlandish name of Louisa Hollandina, was something of an artist. In the year of Sophia's marriage, she was converted to Rome, and immediately afterwards she went to France and settled at the Abbey of Maubuisson, a few miles north of Paris. The

Abbey had a long and interesting history. The famous Mère Angélique, with St. Vincent de Paul, the most remarkable of the French converts of St. Francis de Sales, had come from Port Royal to clean up its abuses and to restore the Benedictine rule; and when Louisa Hollandina entered the Abbey, to remain there for fifty years, the convent peace was definitely the peace of austerity. Louisa Hollandina accepted the austerity with the enthusiasm of a La Vallière. She refused to have any of the rules relaxed for her benefit, and when, in 1664, she was chosen Abbess, she declined the distinctions and comforts that had before belonged to her office. She was energetic, charitable, and masterful. Like St. Thomas of Canterbury, she always wore a hair shirt next her skin, but in her the *dévote* was very human. Her feverish industry was accompanied by a sense of humour, shared by her sister, which was ironic and not without an occasional spice of malice. She was a nun, but she remained a princess and a woman of the world. Louisa Hollandina died at Maubuisson at the age of eighty-six, certainly not the least remarkable of

a remarkable family. The third sister, Henrietta Maria, appears to have had no exceptional characteristics.

Like most royal families in exile, the Electress Elizabeth and her children were always short of money, and were often compelled to sell jewels to satisfy their creditors. But the Electress was fortunate in the possession of a wealthy English friend, Lord Craven, who finally provided an English home for the lady to whom he devoted his life, and whom he is said to have married.

In 1648, the Peace of Westphalia gave the Lower Palatinate, with the town of Heidelberg, to the Elector Charles Louis, Sophia's eldest brother. It was only a small part of what he regarded as his patrimony, but Descartes urged him to remember that half a loaf is better than no bread, and that it was far preferable in any circumstances to rule in Heidelberg than to loaf in Leyden.

During his first exile in Holland, Sophia frequently met her dangerous cousin, afterwards King Charles II, and there was a suggestion that they should marry, but nothing came of the proposal.

The prince's prospects were sufficiently dark, and marriage with him must have seemed in 1649 the assurance of perpetual exile. From 1650 to 1658 Sophia lived in Heidelberg with her brother Charles Louis, a learned prince, whose first ambition, when he returned from exile, was to restore the fortunes of the famous university. Sophia's life at Heidelberg was interesting and happy. After the death of Descartes, her sister Elizabeth paid her brother's Court a short visit, lecturing on the Cartesian philosophy in the university. Rupert, too, paid visits to his brother, unfortunately fomenting family strife by blurting out to his sister-in-law what everyone but she knew quite well—the Elector's love-affair with one of her ladies. The Electress was an uneducated snob with a passion for card playing, who bored Sophia to death, and she probably had little sympathy with her in the scandal which ended in a divorce and the Elector's morganatic marriage with his mistress, by whom he had no less than fourteen children.

In 1658, when she was twenty-eight, Sophia married the Duke Ernest Augustus of Brunswick-

Luneburg, the youngest of four brothers who divided between them the country afterwards known as the Kingdom of Hanover. The princes of Brunswick-Luneburg belonged to a new order of German princes. Despite their nominal Protestantism and the common German enmity to France, the German princelings had been vitally affected by the mode and manner of Louis XIV even as early as the year 1658, when the *Grand Monarque* had only been fifteen years on the throne. The theory enshrined in the declaration "*L'Etat, c'est moi*" attracted every petty sovereign, with its assumption of an autocratic power which was entirely indifferent to the interests of the commonalty—the princes buying and selling and exchanging their subjects for soldiers as if they were slaves. There was, too, a certain interest in culture and love of beauty stimulated in the case of many of the German princes by long and expensive journeys to Italy.

The Duke Ernest Augustus was the youngest of his family. His eldest brother was childless. The second brother, George William, was pledged not to marry, spent a great deal of his life in Venice,

and had a nice taste in champagne. The third brother, John Frederick, was converted to Catholicism, and was received into the Church in the church of St. Francis in Assisi. Sophia declared that she found her husband lovable because she had to love him. The match was no bad one, and it was time she married if she were ever to marry at all.

Sophia had a deep affection for all her family, but, apart from her own children, for none did she feel so keenly as for her niece Elizabeth Charlotte, the daughter of her brother, the Elector, who came to her in Hanover soon after the marriage with Ernest Augustus and stayed with her for seven years. Elizabeth Charlotte was married in 1671 to the Duke of Orléans, brother of Louis XIV, whose first wife, the fascinating Henrietta Maria of England, the daughter of Charles I, had died the year before. The Elector believed that a French alliance was necessary for the security of the Palatinate—a bad political blunder since the one result of the marriage, so far as his people were concerned, was one more war—and Elizabeth Charlotte was com-

pelled to change her religion, which does not appear to have troubled her very much, and to leave her native country, for which she yearned until the end of her life. She was a fat jolly German woman, with, according to Saint-Simon, "the face and the manners of a Swiss Guard," monstrously indiscreet, and gifted, or cursed, with a tremendous sense of humour. "I am as square as a cube," she wrote when she was forty-six. "My skin is red, with yellow patches on it; my hair is getting quite grey; my nose and my two cheeks as well have been horribly scarred by small-pox. I have a large mouth and bad teeth; and there you have a picture of my pretty face."

The Duke of Orléans was years her senior and entirely horrid. Saint-Simon has left a vivid sketch of him. "In person Monsieur was a little man with a big paunch, the heels of his shoes were so high that he looked as if he was walking on stilts. He was always bedizened with ornaments like a woman; covered with rings, bracelets, and jewels. He wore a long black-powdered wig, with curls brought well to the front; and ribbons all over him wher-

ever he could stick them on. He was always perfumed."

Elizabeth Charlotte had no affection for her unpleasant husband, but she made the best of a bad bargain. "I was stuck here against my will," she wrote to her aunt Sophia. "Here I must live and here I must die whether I like it or not." But her "honest German stomach" was always crying out for a "good salad made of German cabbage and bacon." The elaborate etiquette of the French Court bored her to death. "There is nothing more tiresome," she wrote, "than to eat alone with a score of big fellows standing around, watching you chew and counting every mouthful." She hated Madame de Maintenon, whom she described most unfairly, in letters that she knew would be opened and read before they reached her relative, as "the wizened old thing, the old slut, the old wretch, the old horror, the filthy old creature." That she had wit is shown in her remark when, thanks to de Maintenon, Louis had grown religious and Versailles deadly dull, that "the King imagines he is pious when everybody is bored to death."

This German princess, "so chaste in morals, so ribald in speech"—I quote M. Jacques Boulenger —was the mother of the d'Orléans who was Regent of France during the minority of Louis XV, a prince of great ability and charm, with morals of the vilest. His mother had a deep affection for him, but when he presented himself to her after pledging himself, against her wishes, to marry Mdlle. de Blois, the daughter of the King and Louise de la Vallière, Saint-Simon relates: "Madame gave him such a sounding box on the ear that it was heard some paces off, covering the poor prince with confusion in the presence of the whole Court, and filling the numerous spectators, of whom I was one, with prodigious amazement."

Probably, for Elizabeth Charlotte herself, the saddest incident of her life occurred in 1688, when, after the death of her brother, Louis claimed part of the Palatinate for his sister-in-law and French troops invaded her loved native country, with the usual ruthless killing and destroying.

It was from her niece in Versailles that Sophia, in her home in north Germany, kept in touch with

the politics of France and England, which became of increasing interest to her as death after death in her family brought her nearer to the English throne.

Sophia's life in Hanover was peaceful and happy. Her husband, who had become titular Bishop of Osnabruck, was amiable, well-to-do, and comparatively faithful. Six sons and one daughter were born in sixteen years. The second son, born in 1661, was to be King George I of England. The one daughter was to marry Frederick of Prussia and to be the grandmother of Frederick the Great. Peaceful domesticity was disturbed in 1674, when Ernest Augustus and his brother fought with distinction with the allied army that opposed Turenne in Alsace, and Sophia's ambition for her husband and sons was threatened by her amorous brother-in-law's marriage with his fascinating French Huguenot mistress. The eldest brother was dead, George William had promised not to marry, and Sophia was dreaming of the united kingdom of Hanover over which, as a matter of fact, her son was ruling when he was called to the English

throne. Fortunately for Sophia no son was born of George William's marriage. The only daughter, the unlucky Sophia Dorothea, was married for reasons of dynastic policy to Sophia's son George in 1662.

Sophia disliked the marriage, but Sophia Dorothea was an heiress, and the union of the two cousins made Hanoverian union certain. The outspoken Duchess of Orléans was equally opposed to the arrangement. She said in one of her letters: "Like the parrot of the Duke of Savoy, though she holds her tongue she thinks a great deal." Sophia Dorothea was bored by her husband. He was dour, silent, serious, a professional soldier, and one of the most capable generals in the Imperial army. In the early days of his married life he was rarely at home. He certainly showed no care or affection for the woman whom he had been obliged to marry. George was, however, a man of talent and character, and he was extremely popular in Hanover. He had none of his mother's intellectual interest or of his father's and uncle's dilettantism, but there is not the smallest justification for Thackeray's charge

that he ill-used his wife. "She was most beautiful, lively, witty, accomplished; his brutality outraged her; his silence and coldness chilled her; his cruelty insulted her." The truth is that George was a typical German and that Sophia was a Frenchwoman. And never the twain shall meet.

Neglected by her husband, doubtless resenting the thinly veiled hostility of her mother-in-law, Sophia Dorothea was tragically ready for her Bothwell, and he appeared in the person of Philip von Königsmarck, a lover of all women and a consummate fool who kept the princess's letters and contrived his own ruin and hers. The intrigue went on for years before it was discovered by George's father's "old painted Jezebel of a mistress," who had herself been in love with Von Königsmarck. There was no question of the princess's guilt. Her own father admitted it. Von Königsmarck disappeared, and Sophia Dorothea was banished to the castle of Ahlden, where she lived in miserable loneliness for thirty-two years. Neither her husband nor her son, afterwards gallant, podgy George II, nor her daughter ever saw her again. It was thought

that when the English crown fell into his lap, George would have consented to a reconciliation and would have brought a wife to England. But he cared nothing for the domestic sentiments of the English people, and he landed in England with his two German mistresses, the skinny Maypole and the immensely fat Elephant.

It has been suggested that Sophia had some responsibility for her daughter-in-law's tragedy. But that is absurd. She disliked Sophia Dorothea's mother. She deprecated her easy-going upbringing, so different to her own stern Calvinist training. She probably commented, "I told you so" when the intrigue was discovered. But Sophia Dorothea, like Mary Stuart, was responsible for her own fall.

The Elector Ernest Augustus's admission to the Imperial Electorate marks the climax of the fortunes of his House. He died in 1689, an easy, cultured man with a taste for Italian opera, French cooking, and Paris fashions; a fond and unfaithful husband. The gibe that his son journeyed from a rude and almost savage country to a modern Athens

when he came from Hanover to London is ridiculous. The father of King George was a man of admirable taste, and his mother infinitely better educated and informed than the majority of Englishwomen of her time.

After her husband's death, Sophia lived in retirement with her books and her friends. She read Montaigne and Rabelais. She wrote witty, outspoken and cynical letters to her intimates. Her religious position was very like that of her descendant, Queen Victoria. She disliked enthusiasm. She laughed at the early missionary efforts of the Lutheran Church, urging the wisdom of first converting the Germans. She hated Catholicism, and she appears to have been at times both Calvinist and Lutheran. "We are told that in the Father's house are many mansions," she wrote to Madame de Brion. "When you are in yours and I am in mine, I will not fail to pay you the first call; and I fancy that we shall agree very well, for then there will be no longer any question of religious controversies." Again anticipating Victoria, Sophia was a thorough Erastian. "Lutheran princes are the

Popes of our Church," she said, "and must be obeyed."

Sophia played a considerable part with her Roman Catholic sister, the Abbess of Maubuisson, in the "reunion conversations" that took place between Leibnitz, the German philosopher, and Bossuet, the great French preacher—conversations that anticipated Malines, with the same apparent failure. Leibnitz, who was for years in the service of the Brunswick family, was one of the most remarkable of seventeenth-century Germans—philosopher, mathematician, and statesman. Early in his career, he evolved a plan for luring Louis XIV into a "holy war" against Egypt, to prevent him from harrying the German States, and Napoleon was amazed to discover the plan of campaign in the Hanover archives a hundred years later. The versatility of Leibnitz was wonderful, his industry prodigious. And, after serving many princes, he died in poverty and neglect.

The Elector George was not the man to tolerate his mother's interference in public affairs, but it was she and not he whose name stood in the Act

of Succession of the English Parliament, and in the last years of her life Sophia was most concerned with English affairs. She was growing old. She never believed that she would herself sit on the English throne. With Queen Anne, she was half a Jacobite. But when Anne's son, the Duke of Gloucester, died, and it was abundantly clear that the English would not tolerate a Roman Catholic sovereign, she was insistent in caring for the future of her family, playing her cards with singular astuteness. She had to deal with the over-zeal of the fussy Burnet, who assured her that "the eyes of all the Protestants in England turn towards the Electress of Hanover." She had to take account of Harley, who publicly declared: "So long as I live, England shall not be governed by a German." She did not forget Bolingbroke, who persuaded Anne to write her an impertinent letter a few days before her death. She negotiated with Marlborough, the shifty, whom both she and her son thoroughly understood. And she left the English succession safe for the Elector George. Sophia died on 8th June, 1714, at the age of eighty-four. Anne died on 1st

August. George made his entry into London on 20th September.

In her old age a large part of Sophia's interest and affection were centred on her only daughter, the Electress of Brandenburg, who predeceased her by nine years. Sophia Charlotte had inherited her mother's strength of character as well as her intellectual interests, and her grandson, Frederick the Great, who had no exaggerated respect for his ancestors, often paid tribute to his grandmother's greatness of soul. She disliked her loutish husband, with his blatant infidelities. She was bitterly disappointed by her son, the beer-swilling Frederick William of Prussia, famous in history for his collection of gigantic soldiers. She took no part in public affairs, living a life apart, and taking little care to conceal her contempt for her husband and his Court.

LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE

LOUISE DE LA VALLIERE

1644–1710

LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE

LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE, the sweetest, the kindest, and the saddest of all the mistresses of kings, was a maid of Touraine, that land of romance that has given French literature Rabelais, Balzac, and Alfred de Vigny. She was born at Tours, the daughter of a country gentleman of modest means whose family motto, inscribed on the wall of his dining-hall, tragically suggested the fate of his daughter—*Ad principem ut ad ignem amor indissolubilis*. Louise spent most of her youth with her uncle, afterwards Bishop af Nantes, from whom she acquired that deep devotion to the Catholic faith which for years made her life miserable and which at the end was her consolation. Her father died when she was thirteen, and two years afterwards Louise became lady-in-waiting to the three daughters, by his second wife, of Gaston d'Orléans, second son of Henri IV, and uncle of Louis XIV, a prince, without the smallest tenacity of purpose,

who played a clown's part in the comic revolutions of the Fronde.

With his nephew firmly established on the throne, Gaston had become a figure of no account. "He was in that disgrace," it was said, "which puts a man among the dead before he himself is really dead." He kept his dull, mean Court in the Château of Blois, where Henry, Duke of Guise, was assassinated by order of Henri III. But, though the château was dull, there were many books in the library, and Louise, who had read nothing but books of piety, steeped herself in the literature of chivalry and romance. Gaston's eldest daughter, the strange masculine princess always known as *La Grande Mademoiselle*, occasionally paid tempestuous visits to Blois, but generally life there was uneventful, for Gaston had become something of a tiresome Puritan in his old age. There was therefore a special thrill of excitement when it was announced that the young King, accompanied by Anne of Austria, the Queen Mother, purposed to stay at the château on his way south to meet his Spanish bride, the Infanta Maria Theresa. The

Princess Marguerite, to whom Louis was particularly attached, had herself dreamed of marrying her cousin, and there were tears as well as smiles when the young King arrived at nightfall amid the clashing of bells and the light of many torches. But for Louise the occasion was sheer excitement.

Louis was a fine figure of a man. He had already proved his character and capacity. He was handsome, well built, with strong features and curling hair. His manners were grave for his years, and everything that he did, he did extremely well. He was every inch a king and every inch a man, and Louise fell in love with him at first sight. She saw the King for the second time on his marriage day in Paris.

After the death of Gaston and the marriage of the Princess Marguerite to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Louise became attached to the suite of Henrietta of England, the delicious daughter of Charles I, who was married to Philippe d'Orléans, the King's brother, a prince who painted his face and had many other equally unpleasant habits. One of Henrietta's shoulders was a little higher

than the other, but the beauty of her face and figure were universally acclaimed. She was graceful, coquettish, with an eager hunger for gaiety that was not unreasonable when it is remembered that she had just escaped from the dull, half-starved Court of her exiled mother, and that her life had been overshadowed by the tragedy of her father's death. It had been suggested to Louis that he himself should marry Henrietta, but at the time he was fascinated by the charms of Mazarin's niece, and Henrietta was too thin for his taste. She reminded him, he said, of the bones in the Cemetery of the Innocents. But when Henrietta was married to his brother and had become the leading figure in all the gaities of the youthful Court—the moonlight drives, the torchlight dances, the theatrical performances—the King began to regret his decision, particularly as his amiable fat Spanish wife bored him to death.

It is possible that the relations between Louis and his sister-in-law were entirely innocent, but it is not probable. "As they were both friendly and charming," wrote Mme. de la Fayette, "and both

born with an instinctive inclination to gallantry, and as they met every day or two in the midst of pleasures and entertainments, it seemed to everyone that each possessed for the other that charm which is the usual precursor of great passions." The Court began to talk, the Queen grew jealous, and the Queen Mother, a much more important personage, began to fear scandal. Louis held his mother in great respect and affection. He never forgot the storms of the Regency through which she had successfully passed, or how much she was responsible for the successful beginnings of his reign. She remonstrated with him, and doubtless spoke far more sharply to Henrietta. He promised amendment and certainly determined to be discreet. He and Henrietta agreed that to make their frequent meetings possible and unnoticed Louis should pay mock love to one of Henrietta's ladies, and Louise de la Vallière, because she was shy and virtuous and eager to please, was chosen as the royal "bonnet."

Louise had been at Court for over a year when the King and Madame devised the comedy in which

she was to play a leading part. She was very pretty, with tender eyes, fair hair, and a modesty unusual in her surroundings. Hardly out of her childhood and intensely romantic, she had conceived an almost idolatrous love for the King, long before he had said anything more to her than a few courteous commonplaces. Their first intimate interview took place in the garden at Fontainebleau. One of the contemporary descriptions of Louis XIV in his youth says that "his whole person was so impregnated with the most imposing majesty that it revealed itself alike in his slightest gestures and his most ordinary actions without any appearance of pride, but with an air of grave simplicity." Gravity, indeed, was the most striking characteristic of the young King. He began to make love to Louise less than half seriously when she astounded him by bursting into tears and whispering through her sobs, "I love you, sire, I love you." At first, with his experience of the women of his Court, Louis thought that this was considered and rather pretty acting, but he quickly realised the sincerity and was moved by the girl's charm. "The comedy was

played," says Claude Ferval, "but not as it had been intended." Louise was too much in love to resist the King for long, and the liaison was soon public knowledge. Madame realised that her little reign was over, and, disinclined to break her heart over any man, even over the King, she promptly supplied herself with another lover, and Louise, still diffident and more than half ashamed, was recognised as the royal favourite. She asked for nothing. She refused all the honours that the King would have pressed on her. The royal mistress is always the victim of jealous malevolence, but Louise's disinterestedness was recognised even at Fontainebleau. "She loved the person of the King so well," it was said, "that it was clear she would have loved him as much had he been a simple nobleman and she a great queen."

The pictures painted of Louise during her days of glory are doubtless over-flattering. He must be a daring artist who would paint a realistic portrait of a great king's favourite. Everyone admitted that her eyes were pretty and that her complexion was good, but it was also said that she was "emaciated,

with hollow cheeks, an ugly mouth and teeth, a thick end to her nose and a long face." But Louise was a splendid horsewoman. She looked well in a habit and she was absolutely without fear. "She spurs her horse forward," says the Duc d'Enghien, "not even the men can keep pace with her."

Versailles was in process of creation, and dances, masques, and fêtes were given in the grounds with Louise conspicuous among the ladies of the Court. For a while, Louis was over head and ears in love, sufficiently, indeed, to be furiously jealous without the smallest cause. His mother urged him to bring the liaison to an end, and, when she found him obdurate, begged him to be more discreet, and Louise was sent with Madame, in whose entourage she nominally remained, to Saint Cloud. But not for long. The King could not bear her out of his sight, and soon Madame and her lady-in-waiting were back at Fontainebleau.

Louise was surrounded with intrigue and jealousy which she appears only to have half understood, for her intelligence was none too great. Her life was, indeed, one long series of passionate

thrills followed by dull and lonely repentance. After a first lover's quarrel, she made her way on foot, early in the morning, from the Tuileries to the Convent of the Visitation in the village of Chaillot and begged the Mother Superior to accept her as a novice. She admitted that she loved a man whom she could not marry and that he did not want to see her again. There was no suggestion of repentance for her own sin, and the Mother Superior quite properly refused to receive her.

"Why?" asked Louise.

"Your anguish is not holy."

"What must I do to make it so?"

"Go on suffering! Suffer much more!"

The King quickly repented of his petulance, and when he learned that Louise had left the Tuileries, he galloped to Chaillot, and, after a passionate love scene, his mistress returned to Paris in a royal carriage with a royal escort. Her position, however, in the household of Madame grew more and more uncomfortable, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the King persuaded the princess to permit Louise to remain in the Tuileries.

Louise's unhappiness was immensely increased when she was publicly denounced by Bossuet in a sermon in the chapel of the Louvre. The preacher first made an appeal to Louis: "King, listen to Jesus and learn from that King of Glory that all your heart should be given to loving Him and to making Him love you!" Then he turned to the seats where Louise de la Vallière was sitting, and continued: "Oh, idolatress and shameless creature, cast yourself out of this heart. Shadows and phantoms disperse in the presence of truth. True love waits to enter the King's heart. False and deceptive love, would you dare to keep it out?"

Louise sobbed; but Louis was not yet in the mood to obey the admonitions of a priest. Years were to pass before he arrived at piety and Madame de Maintenon. And Louise was reckless though hell was to be the punishment for her sin. "What does my damnation matter," she said, "so long as I love him whom I cannot prevent myself from loving?"

Louise's enemies took care that details of the King's love affairs should be repeated to the Spanish Queen, Maria Theresa, and there were many

scenes and recriminations. Louis hated scenes and was essentially kind-hearted, and he promised his wife that he would become a faithful husband when he was thirty. He was then twenty-five!

His mother was less easily placated. For the first time they had a serious quarrel. He hotly resented his mother's description of his mistress as "an object of miserable sin, a dangerous bondage, a stumbling-block." He finally declared that no doubt his soul was in peril, but that, though he deplored the fact, there was no help for it. His passion was too strong for him. And with that Anne of Austria had to be content. She was ageing and weary, and longing to leave the Court to spend the end of her days in peace at Val de Grace.

A week before Christmas, 1663, Louise bore the King a son, arrangements for the child's disposal having been made by the invaluable Colbert, whom Louis had inherited from Mazarin, and who was to be one of the most effective of his Ministers. All the Court, of course, knew of the event within a few hours after it had happened, but Louise, who always tried to persuade herself that her misdoings

were unknown, contrived, weak and ill as she was, to be present at the midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Her son was taken from her immediately after his birth.

Early in the next year Louis persuaded his mother to compel his wife to receive his favourite. La Vallière, ashamed and reluctant, was dragged into the Queen's room, and the Queen was so enraged at the slight put upon her that she had a violent fit. Her nose bled, and two days later she gave birth to a still-born child.

Louise began to find her position more and more intolerable. She respected the Queen and sympathised with her disinclination to meet her husband's mistress. She steadily refused to follow the common custom of royal favourites and cover her relations by a discreet *marriage de convenance*. She would receive for herself hardly anything, though she permitted the royal favour to be extended bountifully to her brother, who, anticipating the Duke of Marlborough, was ready enough to exploit his sister's position for his own ends. And at Court she had no friend. She would ask nothing for

herself, and she would ask little for others. She must have been something of a bore, and she was commonly regarded as a demure hypocrite, and not without apparent reason.

A second child was born to La Vallière in 1665. In January of the next year Anne of Austria died. Almost immediately afterwards the King, no longer having to fear his mother's displeasure, made his mistress lady-in-waiting to his wife. In 1666 her brother's military success in the campaign in Holland added to her own prestige. A third child was born, this time a girl who was legitimatised under the name of Mlle. de Blois and who married the Prince de Conti, and thus became a princess of the blood.

Louise's days as favourite were growing to an end. In the autumn of 1666, Athenais, Marquise de Montespan, came back to the Court. Before her marriage Louise had feared her as a rival, and rejoiced when her husband had taken her away to his ancestral home in the Pyrénées. But La Montespan came back to conquer. She was more beautiful than La Vallière. She was witty while her rival

was dull; shameless while her rival was modest. And Louis was by no means insensible to her charm. The Court was quick to realise the rise of a new star:

> On dit que La Vallière
> S'en va sur son declin,
> Montespan prend sa place,
> Il faut que tout y passe
> Ainsi de main en main.

It is quite true that Louise never made her lover foolish by indiscretions. But it is also true that Louise never in her life said anything that was either witty or intelligent. Moreover, Louis's passion had almost run its course, while Louise's many trials and the three children which she had borne in secret and in most uncomfortable circumstances made her look years older than she really was. Louis protested that his love for her would always continue. "I adore your heart which would have loved me even if I had not worn a crown; that heart which is not dazzled by honours or any of the things that other women covet and which has remained untainted in the midst of corruption." It

is probable, indeed, that he intended to retain both his mistresses—one for the times when he was eager for thrill and amusement, and the other when he needed comfort and peace. But while La Montespan was playing all her cards with consummate skill and address, poor Louise was at her worst. She was miserable and unhappy, and was again *enceinte*. In May 1667, without her knowledge and much to her misgiving, Louise was created a duchess. The royal decree is, as has been well said, a striking example of sovereign audacity:

> The favours of kings being the outward sign of the worthiness of those who receive them, and the most glorious praise of the subject honoured by them, we, Louis, by the grace of God King of France and of Navarre, believe we cannot better express publicly the special esteem in which we hold the person of our dear and well-beloved and very trusty Louise de la Vallière, than by conferring on her the highest titles of honour to which she is entitled by the quite exceptional affection inspired in our heart by her many rare virtues. And though her modesty has often been opposed to our desire to have raised her before this to a position in keeping with our esteem and her good qualities, still the affection in which we hold her and our sense of justice do not permit of our delaying any further in recording

our recognition and our gratitude for merits so apparent to us.

Her title carried with it a very considerable revenue, but neither rank nor riches could make Louise happy. Her position was assured, her daughter was legitimatised, but she knew that she had lost her lover's heart. With the other ladies of the Court, she would have followed him to Flanders, where he went to command the French army, but she was ordered to remain at Versailles. Rumours reached her that the successful end of the campaign, which had hardly seen the firing of a gun, was marked by a round of festivities, the King spending his days with the ladies of the Court, and the generally placid Louise was roused to a frenzy of jealousy. She hurried from Versailles to Picardy, rushed into the royal presence, the King being with his Consort, only to receive a natural and not undeserved repulse. Louis regretted what he could hardly have avoided, and on the next day Louise drove by his side on a visit to Arras. But before she returned to Paris she realised that her rival had won. Melancholy never has much chance against gaiety. Louise,

with her pale face and frequent tears, had become a nuisance.

Her fourth child was born in sorrow, and again was taken from her. It is curious that there is no evidence that she ever had any maternal love or ever much regretted that she knew nothing of her sons and daughter. She tried to persuade herself that the King would soon weary of La Montespan's arrogance. She eagerly listened to stories of quarrels. Much of her time was now spent alone, and when she appeared at Court it was to be humiliated by her laughing and audacious supplanter. Louis bluntly admitted to her that he was in love with La Montespan, though he added that he still had for her "feelings of which she could have no cause to complain." She begged permission to leave the Court. But this was refused. There was always a possibility of trouble with La Montespan's half-mad husband, and while La Vallière remained it could always be pretended that she was still the royal favourite. It was a heart-breaking situation beautifully described by Claude Ferval:

"La Vallière was for the future dragged behind

the chariot of her rival. She was obliged to follow her without any outward signs of revolt along the road of her own happiness. By this road to Calvary her passion began gently and imperceptibly to be purified, as she herself verifies. Little by little her soul arrived at those feelings of penitence which have made her the most touching of Magdalenes. Every day the work of expiation was carried out, and she glided down an irresistible slope towards the mystic stream from which her soul had been turned away."

The two women were always together, La Montespan whispering to the King, joking with the Court, the centre of attraction, and, by her side, white-faced, hollow-eyed, La Vallière, continually asked for services which she dared not refuse—to fix a garland of roses, to arrange a headdress, and so on—the King, on occasion, adding positive insult to humiliation. Her intensely sympathetic biographer is probably right in suggesting that she endured all this with a certain bitter pleasure. She was at least near the King and she was at the same time paying for her sin. "It is not the sackcloth

that is killing me," she wrote to Père Cesar; "it is not that which takes away my sleep and rest: it is my remorse! it is, above all, the mean-spirited desire to add to my remorse. Do I not see them daily? Am I not seated face to face with my rival—he at her side, and far from me? Have I not seen? Have I not heard? I do not know what hell is; but I cannot imagine a hell more terrible than that which my heart lives and suffers, and where it remains nevertheless, where, in a way, it finds solace, for never to see him would be a hell which I could not bear!"

Louise now called herself a *demi-pénitente*, and her experiences were written in a sort of diary, preserved, with the title *Réflections sur la Misericorde de Dieu*. She mourned for her sins, but she had by no means lost the desire to sin again. The King's passion was exhausted, but hers was still unextinguished. A kind word from him made her happy. She realised that "her virtue was at the mercy of a caprice."

In the summer of 1670 the seductive Henrietta of England died, almost without warning and in bitter agony, immediately after the visit to England

during which she had persuaded her brother Charles II, to become practically the vassal of France. Henrietta died with something of the gaiety with which she had lived, listening with protest to the stern priest, who said to her as she was moaning in pain, "What, Madame! For twenty years you have offended God, and only for six hours have you suffered and made atonement"; whispering to the King, "More than life itself I regret losing the good graces of your Majesty"; and finally receiving the Viaticum from the hand of Bossuet. The death of her patron had an immense effect on Louise. The words spoken to Henrietta were always ringing in her ears. The great Bossuet had years before denounced her sin, but, as she had seen him by the death bed of Madame, he had appeared to her a figure of kindness and understanding, and she sought his aid and became his penitent. He urged her to leave the Court and to retire to a convent. "Sisters full of compassion would dry her tears; a mother would second her efforts. And at the end the love of Christ would be her recompense."

Without asking the King's permission, Louise once more went to Chaillot. She was received with all kindliness, but in a few hours a royal messenger was knocking at the convent gate, demanding her return. Louise refused, and spent her first night in a convent cell. The next day a second messenger came from the King, this time a Marshal of France, and to him she said:

"Tell the King, I beg you, that, as I have lost the honour of his favour, I ought to have left the Court a long time ago, and that I should have done so, if I could have found the strength never to see him again. If I attempt this sacrifice to-day it is because God has been pleased to help me, and because He has made me understand the necessity of giving myself up to Him."

But Louis was insistent that his orders should be obeyed, and finally it was Colbert himself who escorted Louise from the convent back to the Court. The nuns wept when she left, and Louis wept when he met her. It was an odd characteristic of his that, for all his masculinity, tears came easily to his eyes. But the tears had little meaning, and Louise re-

turned to neglect, to backbiting, and to misunderstanding. Even Mme. de Sevigné—who described Louise as "the little violet who hides herself under the grass, who is ashamed of being a Mistress, of being a mother, and of being a duchess"—did not believe in her repentance or in the reality of her determination to become a nun. "Madame de la Vallière," she wrote, "does not speak any more of retiring: it is quite enough to have said it. Her chambermaid flung herself on her knees to prevent her. How could she resist such an appeal?" But Mme. de Sevigné was wrong. Louise was compelled to stay at Versailles for another year, but always with one thought. She sold her jewels, discharged many of her servants, added to her alms-giving, lived as simply as possible. To Mme. de Maintenon, who asked her if she had really thought what convent life entailed, she said, "When I shall be suffering at the convent I shall only have to remember what they made me suffer here and all the pain will seem light to me." During this year she escaped almost entirely from the thraldom of the King. He no longer dazzled her. He had himself climbed

down from the pedestal on which she had placed him.

Bossuet marked her spiritual progress. "God never leaves her," he said. "Without violence He has succeeded in breaking the bonds that held her." She contrived in these last months in the world to see her children, and a portrait was painted of her with them by her side, and all the time she was steadily making her plans. She decided that the Convent of the Visitation was not austere enough and that she would only find the peace that she sought with the Carmelites. The difficulty was that, according to their rule, no woman could be admitted among the daughters of St. Theresa whose life had not been chaste, and it was Bossuet who persuaded the superior, Mother Agnes of Jesus, to make an exception. But the King's consent was still difficult to obtain. Bossuet pleaded, but La Montespan protested that La Vallière's presence was still necessary for her own position. So shameless was the persecution that a door was made so that the King went to his present favourite's apartment through his old favourite's room.

At last, in 1674, deliverance came to her. She took a ceremonious leave of the King and paid a pathetically friendly farewell visit to the Queen. She supped with La Montespan and performed all the duties that Court etiquette demanded of her. She heard Mass for the last time at Versailles with Louis sitting by her side, and again in tears. And then she drove down the long avenue through Paris to the Faubourg St. Jacques, to the house of the Carmelites, outside of which a curious crowd was waiting to see the King's mistress leave the world. She was thirty-one on that spring morning, and she lived in the Carmel for nearly thirty years. In her wisdom, Mother Agnes of Jesus had decided that Louise's discipline should at the beginning be as light as possible, but the penitent implored that she should be given no favours. "The body has sinned, let the body be punished," she said, and no penance was too hard, no austerity too trying for her. She learned to sweep, to wash, and to cook. She endured agonies from the hard sandals which the sisters wore, but she never complained. In her letters she protested that, from the moment she

passed through the convent gate, she began to experience a happiness and tranquillity that she had never known before. Again to quote Claude Ferval: "She was like a traveller who after a rough voyage arrives at last in the river. The hours passed and she did not realise their length. She had been so weary and she needed rest so much."

She was received into the Order on the 2nd June in the presence of many of her old Court friends, and from that moment the Duchesse de la Vallière was Sister Louise de la Misericorde. When she was escorted to her cell, it was filled with flowers. On only two occasions does this happen to a Carmelite—when she enters her cell for the first time, and when she leaves it never to return. A year later Sister Louise took her final vows. At this ceremony the Queen was present, and Bossuet preached the sermon from the text: "He who was on the Throne said I can revive all things." Referring to the life of the penitent, he said:

"She turned against her body as from her most dangerous enemy; she declared war against it, irreconcilable and to the death. When once the body

has been deceived by pleasure, the soul must keep it in check by force, and, for fear of allowing herself the slightest freedom from which she might again stray, she had chosen the cloister. There, shut in on all sides, how could she breathe if she could not turn towards heaven?"

The Queen handed Louise the black veil of the Order, the Bishop blessed it, the Prioress arranged its folds. Mme. de Sevigné was in the chapel. "The beautiful and courageous creature," she wrote, "yesterday took the vows in the chapel of Notre Dame des Champs, and she did it as she has done everything else in her life, in a noble and charming manner." Years afterwards, Mme. de Sevigné paid a visit to Sister Louise, and found her happy and charming, and even stouter and more content. The Queen and the royal princesses also paid visits to her, and La Montespan came several times. Her daughter kept in affectionate touch with her mother, though "the wicked little harpy" had little of La Vallière's piety. As the years went on it was the daughter only who remembered her. The King bluntly said that she had ceased to exist for him

when she left the Court. Her daughter's muddled affairs were in her later years her only worldly trouble, but she suffered severely from the hardness of her life. Rheumatism racked her limbs, and she was never without headache and chronic indigestion. On the 4th June, 1710, she tried to drag herself from her cell to Matins. She stumbled on the threshold of the sanctuary, and was found some hours later on the ground numbed with cold. "She was taken into the infirmary, and the first time in thirty years her body rested between sheets." She died a few hours later.

A woman of character but no great gifts, of high aspiration and with a rare capacity for suffering, Louise de la Vallière has a place in history because for a few years she swayed the heart of a great King by her innocence, by her charm, mainly perhaps because of the idolatry that she offered him. And Claude Ferval has written her epitaph:

> She loved for love's sake, this weak, gentle woman—without pride or coquetry, without a thought of ambition or self-interest, without a shadow of vanity. While she retained the smallest hope of holding her lover,

she was ready to suffer, to be belittled, even to sacrifice her dignity. But when all hope had gone, she found a new store of energy in her devotion to God, and His love made her live again. She clung to this love, and strength came to her at every step of her way, until at last her soul rose to its full possibilities through her heart.

MARIA THERESA

MARIA THERESA
1717–1780

MARIA THERESA

ONE of the supreme results of the Reformation," writes Mr. Belloc, "has been the growth of nationalism." It is due, he suggests, to Calvin's vast influence that Europe has been disrupted, and he adds that, in the modern religion of patriotism, there is the constant illusion of a chosen race, with the consequent yearning to conquer and destroy. But, though European unity was certainly destroyed by the Reformation, and the loss of a common loyalty to a supernatural and supernational authority made the developments of nationalism possible, its growth was very slow and was, indeed, encouraged by circumstances only remotely connected with the secessions from the Roman obedience.

International politics were, until the outbreak of the French Revolution, almost completely dominated by dynastic considerations, and for many centuries mainly by the long-drawn-out struggle

between the Bourbons and the Hapsburgs for the dominance of Europe. And, while the giants were struggling for the first place, the pigmies were struggling as to who should have the second, third, and fourth places. Germany was ravaged by the petty ambitions of petty princes, and, when Frederick the Great appeared on the centre of the European stage, it was not for Prussia or the Prussians that he was concerned, but for the Hohenzollerns. He stole, lied, and murdered to aggrandise his family, and his constant antagonist, Maria Theresa of Austria, was no more a patriot in the modern sense of the word than Frederick of Prussia or Louis XIV of France, who, when he exclaimed, "*L'État, c'est moi,*" was uttering what at that time was an exact truth.

In England, Elizabeth, the virgin queen, wretched in her old age in the knowledge that she was to be succeeded by the son of the woman whom she had hated, could have no dynastic ambition, and was actuated in her crafty statesmanship by the ambition to establish the greatness of her country. And, since the Reformation had materially

affected the relations of England with the Continental powers, it is in England that Mr. Belloc finds the chief justification for his suggestion that modern nationalism was born with the Reformation. "The illusion of a chosen race" may have, as Charles Kingsley would have us believe, influenced the Elizabethan seamen who fought against the Spaniards, and it is undoubtedly true that the people of England, in contrast with the governing class that had grown fat on filchings from the monasteries, were only persuaded to support the Reformation when they were convinced that Spain and Rome were identical. So in England it happened that if the Reformation created the new nationalism, it was the new nationalism, in itself again affected by the new capitalism, that made it possible for the Elizabethan statesmen to contrive the definite and permanent break with Rome.

But, even if a complicated variety of circumstances caused the birth of nationalism in England in the sixteenth century, there is little sign of it in European affairs generally until the end of the eighteenth century. The Napoleonic conquests,

achieved though they were to no small extent by international armies, convinced the French that they were the chosen people, the heirs of Rome, the guardians of European culture. This belief survived the disaster of 1870, and is perhaps stronger to-day than it has ever been. No Frenchman really regards the men of other nations as his intellectual or spiritual equals, and the conviction of superiority continues despite the fact that the French are certainly the true heirs of Rome in their entire freedom from racial prejudice. A similar conviction became common in Germany after Sedan, and was carefully fostered in the schools and universities. The Hohenzollerns themselves may have remained as completely dynastic as Frederick the Great, but in the later nineteenth century it was necessary that the dynasty should have the support of the people, and that dynastic ambition and national ambition should be identical. The latest people to be persuaded that they are the chosen race are the Italians. Fascism absolutely depends on the wide acceptance of this same illusion. Mr. Belloc is, of course, more than justified in suggesting the devas-

tation and destruction that such exaggerated nationalism inevitably causes.

Whatever may be the form of government, nationalism must be in its very nature a permanent threat to peace, and there is no greater delusion than the idea that democracy is a reliable insurance against war. In one of his letters to Colonel House, Mr. Robert Lansing, President Wilson's Secretary of State, said: "No people on earth desire war, particularly an aggressive war. If the people can exercise their will, they will remain at peace. If a nation possesses democratic institutions, the popular will will be exercised. Consequently, if the principle of democracy prevails in a nation, it can be counted upon to preserve peace and to oppose war." That is unmitigated nonsense. Nations have often desired war, and aggressive wars at that, and the madness may well seize them again.

National ambition remains in the twentieth century the possible cause of war. It has become as dangerous as the dynastic ambition that caused almost ceaseless war through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Men were slaughtered, cities

were destroyed, children starved that princes might grab.

The four chief protagonists of the European drama of the eighteenth century were Louis XV of France, who with the aid of his mistresses, contrived to lose almost all that his great-grandfather had won; Frederick, the painted pervert of Potsdam; Catherine of Russia; and Maria Theresa, Archduchess of Austria, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, wife of the Holy Roman Emperor, and mother of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France. A woman could not be elected Empress, but by the famous Pragmatic Sanction, Maria Theresa's father, the Emperor Charles VI, who had no son, secured his daughter's succession to the sprawling possessions of the Austrian Hapsburgs, which included Austria itself, Bohemia, Hungary, Lombardy, and a large part of the Netherlands.

Maria Theresa was born in 1717. She succeeded her father when she was twenty-three. Four years before her accession she had married her cousin, Francis of Lorraine, to whom she was an adoring

and Victoria-like wife, and by whom—in this she outdid Victoria's record—she had sixteen children. She was a woman with both beauty and character, and with a tremendous consciousness of the rights, dignities, and duties of her position. The one great aim of her life was that her son should inherit, unimpaired, the possessions that had come to her from her father. She was not aggressive. She had no desire to add to her possessions. But what she had she was determined to hold. She was a Hapsburg, not an Austrian nor a Hungarian, and it was the "august greatness" of the Hapsburgs with which she was most concerned. Her father had dreamed of reconstituting the Empire as it had existed in the sixteenth century in the reign of Charles V, with Spain and a great part of Italy acknowledging the same allegiance as Austria and the Netherlands. But not only was this grandiose ambition not achieved, but the Emperor left to his successor provinces impoverished by constant war, and territory considerably less than that which he had inherited. He had been compelled to cede Servia and Wallachia to Turkey. He had bought agreement to

the Pragmatic Sanction by handing over Naples and Sicily to Spain, Lombardy to the King of Sardinia, and Lorraine to France. And when Charles died and Maria Theresa succeeded him, it was doubtful whether the bribes had secured loyalty and whether the young Queen would be permitted to enter into her inheritance. Cardinal Fleury, the Minister of Louis XV, prepared a plan for the dismemberment of Austria, and Maria Theresa could place little reliance on the support of the German princes. The Electors of Bavaria and Saxony were both hungry for slices of her dominions; but it was from the north, from the man who was to be her enemy all through her life, that the blow actually came.

Frederick the Great had become the third King of Prussia in the same year in which Maria Theresa succeeded her father. Since 1701, the Hohenzollerns, hitherto mere Electors of Brandenburg, had been numbered with the German kings, but they were still parvenus among the kings, and it was Frederick's ambition to make the Hohenzollerns unchallengeable in central Europe. Prussia was a

small and still inconsiderable country. Frederick's purpose was to push out his boundaries. He was eager to grab, and the fact that an inexperienced young woman of twenty-four was reigning in Vienna made it appear good business to grab from her. He offered to support her husband's claim to the Imperial crown if the Queen would cede Silesia to him. Maria Theresa was urged to agree both by her husband and by the English Ambassador, but she indignantly refused and the Prussians marched east. The Austrians were defeated, and Silesia passed permanently to Prussia. It was perhaps the more natural arrangement. It may be that the Silesians themselves, whom no one thought of consulting, would have preferred incorporation with their neighbours rather than allegiance with a far-away power, though Austria's rule was probably lighter than the heavy hand of Prussia. But to Maria Theresa the loss of Silesia was a bitter misfortune. When she was compelled to sign the treaty of peace she felt herself a traitor to her heritage. She had broken the entail. She had parted with her freehold. And for forty years the consuming pas-

sion of her life was a very proper hatred of Frederick.

It was Maria Theresa's courageous and sage statecraft that saved her from far more serious losses. Prussia had entered into an alliance with France, and the moment seemed opportune for carrying out the plan of dismemberment which Fleury had conceived. At the moment of peril Maria Theresa appealed to the patriotism of the Hungarians. She gained their favour by granting them a large measure of self-government, and in a personal address to the Hungarian Parliament she described the difficulties of her position and entrusted her crown and her family to Hungarian loyalty. And the young, beautiful woman, with tears streaming from her eyes, did not appeal in vain. The magnates shouted *Vitam nostram et sanguinem consecramus*, and the Queen was assured of their military support. This and quarrels among her enemies saved the situation. Frederick having used the French, left them in the lurch, and the French army that had occupied Prague was compelled to retreat, with heavy loss, half across

Europe. England had supported the Austrians, and for the time Maria Theresa found England an invaluable ally.

From the death of Louis XIV to the French Revolution, the influence and prestige of France in the comity of the European peoples steadily declined. But the decadence was slow, and, in the middle of the reign of Louis XV, France was still the most powerful of European nations. It was the steady policy of Great Britain to curb and lessen the power of France, and her enemies were always the friends of England. But Georgian diplomacy was very crooked, and the friends of England were generally compelled to pay, and sometimes to pay heavily, that the purposes of England might be served. *L'Albion perfide* was no reasonless term of abuse.

Because of the hereditary enmity between the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons, Austria was naturally inclined to an alliance with, and to some extent dependence on, England, while Bavaria, which was Austria's rival within the German Empire, was as inevitably generally the ally of the French kings.

At the battle of Dettingen, in 1743, where George II, the last English king to fight with his armies in the field, "demeaned himself like a little man of valour," the British, Hanoverians, and Austrians fought against the French and Bavarians.

French influence became predominant for a time in Germany when Charles Albert of Bavaria was elected Emperor in 1740. He died in 1745, and the whole influence of France was exerted to secure the election of his son. But, Great Britain and Austria acting together, with Frederick of Prussia declining to use his vote, Maria Theresa's husband became the head of that very nebulous entity, the Holy Roman Empire. That was a trick for Maria Theresa, and a check for France.

It would be tiresome to endeavour to summarise the wars and the intrigues of Maria Theresa's long reign, or even to enumerate the constant changes of international alliance. The friends of to-day were the enemies of to-morrow. But Maria Theresa herself was entirely consistent. From the beginning to the end Prussia, far more than France, was her enemy. It was Prussia that she fought in the Seven

Years' War. It was Prussia by whom her troops were often defeated, but, nevertheless, it was Prussian ambition that she contrived to curb. The one friend on whom she could always count was the Empress Elizabeth of Russia, the daughter of Peter the Great, who hated Frederick as thoroughly as Maria Theresa hated him, and whose death probably saved Prussia from overwhelming ruin. It was largely owing to the influence of Elizabeth, that Maria Theresa, wearying of dependence on Great Britain, that most dishonest broker, was induced to forget enmity and traditional hostility and to ally herself with France.

This alliance was, from the point of view of France, the supreme blunder of the reign of Louis XV, and was almost entirely due to the influence of La Pompadour. Virtuous wife though she was, Maria Theresa was far too good a politician to bother about the virtue of ladies who might serve her purpose. It is said that she herself wrote an autograph letter to La Pompadour urging the advantages of friendship with Austria, just as it is certain that in years later she wrote to her daughter

Marie Antoinette, strongly advising her to be gracious to the Du Barry, La Pompadour's vulgar successor. La Pompadour was a shrewd woman, but a very amateur diplomat. She had a human love of power, and she was doubtless flattered by the Austrian Queen's recognition of her position and influence. Cautious Ministers protested and were dismissed, and France found herself embroiled in the Seven Years' War, in which she had no sort of direct interest—during which the impoverishment, which was one of the main causes of the revolution, was accelerated, and as the result of which her position in Europe was lost, not to be regained until Napoleon led the revolutionary armies across the Alps.

Generally, too, it may be said that Austria gained little from the alliance. The rise of Prussia was retarded, but not prevented; hostility between southern and northern Germany was increased; and, though for the moment the position of the Hapsburgs might have seemed more secure, they were never again to recover their dictatorship of central Europe. None the less, the French alliance was for

the moment a triumph of Austrian diplomacy. Although it caused a very tepid friendship between Prussia and Great Britain, that friendship was of no great value to the aspiring Frederick.

The marriage of her daughter, Marie Antoinette, a child of fifteen, with the French Dauphin, was intended to make permanent the alliance which had been negotiated by Maria Theresa and the French King's mistress. Maria Theresa did not lack maternal affection, but it was part of her creed that the individual must be sacrificed for the family fortunes, and it was necessary, as it seemed to her, for the preservation of the fortunes of the Hapsburgs that a half-educated child should be sent into exile. The Queen could not realise that the days of the dynasts were coming to an end and that insult and violent death would be the price that her daughter would pay that her mother's ambition might be fulfilled.

The Emperor Francis, Maria Theresa's husband, died in 1762, and her grief was comparable to that of Queen Victoria after the death of Prince Albert. Concerned as she had been all through her life with

delicate political negotiations, she had still been the tenderest and most considerate of wives, but when her husband died she accused herself of neglect of which she had certainly not been guilty. He was a man of no great ability, but to Maria Theresa he was something of a hero, and for eighteen years she mourned his death. Never again would she wear her jewels, and she was always surrounded by the "trappings of woe."

Widowhood made Queen Victoria determined to rule. Widowhood robbed Maria Theresa of half her appetite for rule. Queen Victoria had regarded her husband as an omniscient mentor. Maria Theresa had always realised that she was her husband's superior. She had never permitted him to encroach in the smallest way on her own prerogatives or to stand between her and her own people, and his title of Emperor had brought him little real authority. But after his death, she dowered him with qualities which he never possessed.

She gave to her headstrong son Joseph, who succeeded his father as emperor, authority which her husband had never possessed. Joseph was a child

of his age, a disciple of Voltaire and an admirer of Frederick the Great. He was obstinate, ambitious, and priggish. Shortly before the death of his mother he paid a visit to the French Court, which his sister, the unlucky Marie Antoinette, found difficult to endure. He criticised everything that he saw and gloomily foretold the end of the Bourbon monarchy, a prophecy which perhaps was not very difficult in 1777.

Maria Theresa hated the Prussian King. Joseph admired him, opposed his mother's policy, and favoured an alliance with Prussia, which was obviously good politics and calculated to be of far greater advantage to Austria than artificial arrangements with France or with England. Joseph met Frederick in 1770—and the result was the partition of Poland. Frederick still yearned to grab. Poland, with its hopelessly archaic constitution and its warring nobles, was an easy prey. But he could not grab without the consent of Russia and of Austria, and he only succeeded in his plan by persuading them to grab too. Catherine of Russia regarded the partition of Poland as bad politics—as indeed

it was. Maria Theresa regarded it as a crime. It was a stain on her reign, a blot on her fine record. But she was helpless. With Russia consenting, the partition was certain. For Austria still to oppose Frederick's plan would merely mean that the two rival powers would add to their territories and Austria would have nothing. Her son favoured the partition, and perforce, as Frederick sarcastically commented, Maria Theresa wept, and took.

But the partition did not secure peace. There were quarrels with Bavaria in 1778 and the risk of another war with Prussia, which was, however, averted by the Peace of Teschen in 1779. This was the last great act of Maria Theresa's reign. She was weary and tired and troubled by the character and by the politics of her son. But she could feel that she had not failed in her life's mission. Though Silesia was lost, she had succeeded to a very large extent in preserving the greatness and the prestige of her inheritance.

She died in 1780. The Emperor Joseph, who stood by her bedside, asked, "Are you at ease,

mother?" And her last words were, "I am sufficiently at my ease to die."

She died nine years before the outbreak of the French Revolution. Already trouble was gathering round the head of her daughter in Paris, and on her deathbed, Maria Theresa must have had some regret that the mother was forgotten in the statesman when she sent the child Marie Antoinette to marry the French Dauphin.

CATHERINE THE GREAT

CATHERINE THE GREAT
1729–1796

CATHERINE THE GREAT

M. WALISZEWSKI has detailed the daily routine of the life of Catherine II of Russia. She rose every morning at six, petted the half-dozen greyhounds that slept in a basket by the side of her bed, rinsed out her mouth with a little warm water, rubbed ice on her face, and went at once to her workroom, where her coffee was prepared for her. The Empress drank five cups of coffee, and a pound went to their making. From six to nine she worked alone, reading and writing letters and dispatches, and taking frequent pinches of snuff. At nine she went back to her bedroom, where she received soldiers, statesmen, and officials with whom she had made appointments. The Empress was generally dressed in a white dressing-gown with a cap of white crêpe. The audiences came to an end at midday, and at one or two the Empress, having made a complete toilette and having had her hair elaborately dressed, sat down to

dinner. Immediately before dinner, her grandchildren and her favourites were received, and at the meal there were on most days at least a dozen guests. Catherine cared nothing for elaborate cooking and ate only the simplest dishes, her favourite being boiled beef and salted cucumbers. After dinner one of the Court readers read to the Empress while she worked at her embroidery, and then her secretaries were announced and there was more work, and generally another half-hour or so with her grandchildren.

At four o'clock her recreation hours began. She would arrange her various collections, sometimes play a game of billiards, and at six o'clock she sat down to whist at ten roubles a rubber. Except on state occasions, no supper was served in her palace, and at ten o'clock the Empress went to bed. Almost to the day of her death she was followed to her room, amid the smirks and subdued giggles of the courtiers, by a young man, often young enough to be her son, who was, for the moment, her *amant en tître*. The Empress worked hard, ate and drank sparingly, and was never without a lover.

The greatness of Catherine was due more to fortune than to her own qualities. She had as little moral greatness as her notorious contemporary, Frederick the Great. It is difficult to discover anything rare or elevated in her character, and, while it is obvious that she had a deep and sincere affection for the country which had adopted her, she did nothing to add to the happiness of the Russian people and little to add to the prestige of the Russian Crown. Of all the prominent figure of European history, Catherine was the luckiest. It was sheer good luck that made her an empress and enabled her to retain her throne for thirty-four years.

Catherine was the daughter of Christian Augustus, prince of Anhalt-Zerbst, a soldier in the Prussian service. She was born in Stettin in May, 1729. In 1741, Elizabeth, the daughter of Peter the Great, became Empress of Russia as the result of a successful revolution. Elizabeth, a sovereign of uncommon capacity, was throughout her life the determined, and not unsuccessful, enemy of Frederick the Great, who, when he heard of her death, in 1762, exclaimed to his courtiers, "The sky be-

gins to clear!" As a girl Elizabeth had considerable beauty, but she had grown into a fat and blatant sensualist. The Empress was distantly related to Catherine's mother, and in the year 1744, when the girl was fifteen, she and her mother were summoned to St. Petersburg, the Empress having decided that Catherine should marry her nephew and heir, the Grand Duke Peter, an unpleasant young man belonging to the princely family of Holstein, who was inordinately proud of his German blood and had nothing but contempt for Russia and the Russians. The marriage was largely engineered by Frederick the Great, whose dreams of a great empire appeared likely to remain just dreams so long as Russia opposed his ambitions and was the ally of Austria.

Catherine's father's fortune was no larger than that of any others of the German princelings of the eighteenth century. The outfit that she took with her to Russia consisted only of two or three dresses, a dozen chemises, and the same amount of stockings and handkerchiefs. Her father was a pious Lutheran, who was most anxious that his

daughter should not change her religion even to become the consort of a Russian Czar. But her mother—a fussy, intriguing, and tiresome lady—had no such scruples, and Catherine certainly had no hesitation in adopting Orthodoxy in order to become an empress.

The Grand Duke Peter was feeble both in body and in mind. He was a liar, a coward, and a bully, a drunkard, a spendthrift, at least half mad, and physically most unattractive—"a strange brute streaked with insanity," as Sainte Beuve has described him. Catherine must have been repelled by this most unattractive youth, but German princesses were not trained to admire and love their husbands, and the cool-headed young woman, straight from the narrow society of a German garrison town, was ambitious, and ready to pay the price of satisfying her ambition. Immediately after her arrival in Russia, she seems to have realised that, if she was to reign in Russia, even as a queen consort, she must become a Russian, and this conviction must have been strengthened by Peter's unpopularity, the result of his foolish and persistent

Germanism. She set herself to learn the Russian language. She became, at least, in appearance, an enthusiastic convert to the Orthodox religion. Chance helped her to an early popularity. She became seriously ill with pneumonia and her life was in some danger, and Russia rejoiced when it learned that she had refused the ministrations of a Lutheran pastor and insisted that an Orthodox priest should pray by her bedside.

Catherine was married on the 21st August, 1745, and her first child, afterwards the Czar Paul, was not born until October 1754. It is probably true that Peter was incapable of being the father of a child, and the only reason to suppose that Paul was his son was that he inherited many of his most odious qualities. At least it is certain that in these nine years from 1745 to 1754 Catherine had many lovers. She was a young woman of exuberant vitality, and the Court of Elizabeth, with its appearance of luxury and refinement, had the morals of a rabbit-warren. Catherine, whose religion was a mere matter of political expediency and whose husband was repulsive and probably impotent, could

hardly have been expected to have denied herself the common diversions of the circle in which she lived. But until the death of the Empress Elizabeth her love-affairs were little more than diversions. There was first the handsome Sergius Saltykof, generally supposed to have been the father of Paul. And there was Lev Narychkine, a sort of amateur Court fool, and Zahar Tchernichef, and perhaps some others. But philandering was by no means Catherine's only occupation. She read assiduously and wisely—Tacitus, Montesquieu, and, above all, Voltaire, who became to her as completely a god as he had seemed to Frederick the Great.

In 1755, Stanislaus Poniatowski came to St. Petersburg in the suite of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, the British Ambassador. He was a good-looking, romantic boy of twenty-two. He had lived in Paris, he could talk well, and he could make love with an air. Catherine was twenty-five. Her hair was black, her figure was slim, her voice was pleasant, her laugh was gay, and she had "a mouth that seemed made for kissing." It was not long before the young Pole had become the Grand Duchess's

lover, with the result that he was one day to be the last of the kings of Poland and to play a helpless and ignoble part in the dismemberment of his unhappy country.

Towards the end of the reign of the Empress Elizabeth, Catherine became sufficiently sure of herself to play an independent part in politics, and she was a personage of sufficient importance for the British Ambassador to pay her considerable sums of money, that her influence should be used to break the Russian connection with Austria and France and to bring the great empire over to the side of Prussia and England. The French Ambassador was as assiduous in his attentions to her as Hanbury Williams. Her importance was made greater by the futility of her husband. It was a risky business to interfere in public affairs in Russia while the ruthless Elizabeth lived, but Catherine did not lack audacity. Peter accepted his wife's infidelities as a matter of course, merely insisting that she should receive his mistresses. Her father was dead. Her mother was living in exile in Paris. She had no one but herself on whom to depend. She

had always to face the possibility of banishment from Russia, to go no one could tell where. But she played a lone hand with courage and address, and through sheer audacity won her way into the Empress's complete confidence while she was planning to be her successor.

Elizabeth died on the 5th January, 1762. Catherine had intended at once to seize the throne for herself and to assassinate or imprison the husband whom the old Empress had hated and the whole nation loathed. But her plans miscarried, and Peter was permitted to ascend the throne peacefully, to the openly expressed joy of his patron, Frederick of Prussia. Without delay he proceeded to overturn his aunt's international policy. He withdrew the armies operating against Prussia. He publicly and grossly insulted his wife, and he spent practically his whole time with his "ugly, common, and stupid" mistress, who shared his alcoholic enthusiasm.

Catherine's latest lover was Gregory Orlof. She loved him, M. Waliszewski says, "for his beauty, his courage, his giant's build, his audacity, his reck-

lessness. She loved him also for the four regiments that he and his brothers seemed to hold in the hollow of their hands." In her love affairs Catherine went from one extreme to the other, and M. Waliszewski suggests that, after the gentle Poniatowski, all other love must have seemed "a little strong of flavour." But it was Orlof's regiments that mattered most to the Empress. She had made up her mind to reign alone. She had nerved herself to the hazard of making herself ruler of the people whom she had already made her own. Panine, the Chancellor, was won over, and she had by her side as chief conspirator the Princess Daschkof, of whom Diderot said that she had "no figure, promptitude in her movements, few graces, nothing imposing." The Princess was an enthusiastic disciple of the French Encyclopædists and dreamed of a Russia with a constitutional government. But it was on Orlof and his brothers and their regiments that Catherine depended.

On the 23rd April, Catherine gave birth to a son whom even she did not pretend was legitimate. On the 24th June, Peter left St. Petersburg for his

summer residence, leaving Catherine behind. On the night of the 9th July, she was awakened by Alexis Orlof, who told her that everything was prepared for the revolution. She was sleeping at Peterhof, twenty miles outside the city. She set out at once in a carriage drawn by two horses, taken from a passing peasant's cart, with her lover, her lady's maid, and her *coiffeur*. Nothing had really been prepared, and Catherine won through by sheer luck. The Guards, under the influence of the Orlofs and much vodka, shouted for the Empress, and when Panine, with the boy Paul, arrived, the revolution was effected. The truth was that the nation, army, and people alike loathed Peter of Holstein, and were ready to replace him with Catherine, German as she was, or, indeed, with anyone else who had audacity enough to make a bid for power. Peter had retained a certain number of German troops who remained faithful to him, and Catherine rode at the head of a regiment of grenadiers against her husband. But he cried and crawled. He was arrested without a struggle, and nine days after he died. Catherine always protested that she was not privy

to Peter's death, but it was certainly eminently convenient.

When she became Empress of all the Russias, Catherine was a woman of thirty-three. "Her figure," wrote a contemporary, "is noble and agreeable, her bearing proud; her person and her demeanour full of grace. Her air is that of a sovereign. All her features indicate character. Her neck is long, her head stands out well; the union of these two parts is of remarkable beauty, alike in the profile and in the movements of the head; and she is not unmindful of her beauty in this respect. Her forehead is large and open, her nose almost aquiline; her mouth is fresh, and embellished by her teeth; her chin is a little large, and inclined to fleshiness. Her hair is chestnut in colour, and of the greatest beauty; her eyebrows brown, her eyes brown and very beautiful—in certain lights there seem to be shades of blue; and her skin is of dazzling whiteness. Pride is the main characteristic of her physiognomy. The amiability and good nature which are also to be seen there seem, to a penetrating eye, merely the effect of

an extreme desire—to make a pleasing impression."

Another writer refers to the "hard, smiling face, the heavy, half-masculine features," and calls her "a German *vivandière* turned into a nun." Her energy was extraordinary, her high spirits unconquerable. She said some years after her accession: "Courage! Forward! That is the motto with which I have passed through good years and bad years alike, and now I have passed through forty, all told, and what is the present evil compared with the past?"

Always she lived hard, sparing herself neither work nor anxiety. She was an admirable diplomat, but no humbug. When Russia and Austria were compelled by Frederick the Great to agree to the partition of Poland to "share the swag," Maria Theresa wept—"she is always crying and stealing," said Frederick—but Catherine, much as she deplored the policy to which she had been forced to consent, had no tears to waste. She had no considered policy except to add to the glory of Russia. That was her passion. She, as well as the Princess

Daschkof, might have dreamed of governing on the lines of the French philosophers, but she soon found that this was impossible. She might perhaps make Russia great; it was not practical politics to attempt to make Russia free. She conquered the Crimea. She acquired part of Poland. She gave the country a code of law. She quickened the patriotism which was to enable her grandson, Alexander I, to play the leading part in the destruction of the Napoleonic empire. And she dreamed grandiose dreams that were never realised. The greatest of the dreams was of a Constantinople won back from the Turks and an independent Greek empire allied to Russia and ruled by her younger grandson, Constantine. She philandered with liberalism, writing letters to the revolting Corsicans and expressing much sympathy with the oppressed nationalities, but, when the French Revolution broke out and liberty was seen in action, she was as much affronted as any of the petty German princes, and her admiration for Voltaire grew considerably less.

Intellectual pursuits remained among her inter-

ests, even amid the cares of State, and her procession of lovers. She read and she wrote. Her letters are vivid and picturesque, and she was also the authoress of comedies and stories which are, perhaps happily, forgotten. For her son she never pretended the smallest affection. When he grew up and married, he became the open opponent of his mother's policy, and he was probably privy to more than one plot to depose her from the throne. But for Paul's sons, Alexander and Constantine, she had a deep and almost pathetic affection, and it was always Alexander whom she spoke of as her heir.

The government of Russia during the reign of Catherine, the Empress, was really the government of Russia by the Empress's favourites. Some of them were men with neither character nor ability. One or two of them were men of outstanding qualities. In all, from her accession to her death, at the age of sixty-seven, there were certainly fifteen lovers, who, together, cost Russia some sixteen million pounds.

The five brothers Orlof, to whom she owed her

throne, appear to have shared her favours between them for ten years, from 1762 to 1772. But for the rest, the favourites generally lasted for not more than two or three years, and there was hardly ever more than a twenty-four-hour interregnum between one lover and another. Zoubof, the last of her favourites, with whom she fell in love when she was a woman of sixty, was a boy of twenty-two! Once when she was remonstrated with for the utter lack of dignity in her manner of life, with a favourite always on her doormat, she made the characteristic reply, "I am serving the empire in the education of such capable young men."

Many of her lovers were unfaithful to her. To them all she was more than generous, and she had an amazing capacity for falling violently in love. She described Korsakof, who won her favour when she was forty-nine, as a "a peril to painters, a despair to sculptors." He was, so she said, "a thing of pure beauty," and she raved in this way to Grimm throughout a long letter. Six years later, when Lanskoi, the least mercenary of her lovers,

died in her arms, she wrote, "My room, so pleasant before, has become an empty den in which I can just drag myself about like a shadow."

The one considerable person among Catherine's favourites was Gregory Patiomkin, who, while he was only actually her lover for two years, remained the chief man in her kingdom until the day of his death. Patiomkin was intended for the Church, but being dismissed from his seminary for idleness, obtained a commission in the Guards. He took part with the Orlofs in the *coup d'état* of 1762, and it is said that he gained the attention of his mistress by his parlour trick of imitating the voices of other people. At the beginning of his career he was, indeed, a sort of society clown. But Catherine saw in him a man of considerable talent and had him carefully trained for service to the State. In 1769, Patiomkin served in the first Turkish war with some small distinction. On his return to Russia he quarrelled with the gigantic Alexis Orlof, who knocked out one of his eyes. As he squinted with the other, Patiomkin can have had little claim to physical beauty. In 1773, he was again with the army when

he was suddenly recalled to St. Petersburg. Catherine had one of her sudden inexplicable caprices, and at the beginning of 1774 Patiomkin found himself installed in the anomalous position of "General Aide-de-camp" to the Empress. The lover who had succeeded the Orlofs was a fool. Patiomkin, the Empress protested, was "clever and amusing as the very devil."

He was a very masterful and dominant lover, and the Court agreed that he was the master of his mistress. They might laugh at him as Cyclops, but they were compelled to recognise his power. His demands were exorbitant, and he sulked until he received all for which he asked. He soon controlled both the internal and the external policy of the empire. Foreign Ministers waited on him; the King of Prussia sent him the Black Eagle; the Emperor of Austria made him a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. He was determined to marry the Empress, and nearly succeeded, but Catherine had no mind for another marriage, and when Patiomkin planned to be her husband he ceased to be her lover. He accepted the loss of his position with equanimity.

He took on himself the ignoble task of finding his own successors. He became the Empress's pander, and he remained her chief adviser.

Patiomkin was a tall, dark man, knock-kneed, boisterous, often unwashed, a great eater, with an unpleasant taste for garlic. He had an immense retinue, and lived in a state that was a sort of grubby imitation of Wolsey and Richelieu. He spent immense sums of money, with which the Empress freely supplied him. The soldiers loved him for his free and easy manners, but their officers loathed him. He was vain almost to madness. "I am the spoilt child of God," he once exclaimed. He was, in a phrase, a half-savage, half-civilised Russian, knowing no mean between clothes heavily embroidered with gold and a dirty dressing-gown. He never read anything, but he had a prodigious memory. Europe refused to take Patiomkin seriously as a statesman, but he troubled the European Cabinets because he was essentially an Asiatic. He revelled in the theatrical, building cardboard villages to astound the Empress, and so on. He was nothing of a soldier and something of a coward, and yet he

conquered the Crimea! The greatest factor in his success was his intimate knowledge of Catherine's character. He knew her through and through, and he used his knowledge for his own ends. Like Mazarin, he was a good brother, and his family had a full share of the huge fortune that he amassed. Patiomkin died in 1791, five years before his mistress. Actually he killed himself. "I saw him during an attack of fever devour a ham, a salted goose and three or four fowls, and drink kvass, klukva, hydromel, and all kinds of wine." And Catherine mourned for him as "my pupil, my friend, almost my idol."

Catherine the Great died of apoplexy on the 10th November, 1796. During the last years of her life her intellect failed, and she was persuaded into such crazy schemes as sending an army through Persia to invade India. She was outraged by the French Revolution. She never ceased to mourn for Patiomkin. Her *amours* had become disgusting. She was an amazing creature!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

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1755–1793

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MORE completely, perhaps, than any other great lady, Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, was the sport of circumstance. It was her fate to reap the whirlwind while others had sown the wind.

Destiny is affected by environment as much as by character. The square peg, useful and happy in the square hole, is ineffective and may be a tragic failure when pushed into the round hole. The most pathetic figures of history are the men and women compelled by fate to occupy positions and to undertake responsibility for which they are inadequately equipped, and it is the irony of the story of mankind that, at moments of supreme crisis, the chief parts have so often fallen to men and women merely bewildered by the difficulties and utterly unable to cope with them.

The Bourbon monarchy was doomed when it lost its prestige. The great monarchy of Louis XIV be-

came the ridiculous monarchy when Louis XV installed Du Barry at Versailles. The position of the King's mistress was recognised and not ignoble, but decency demanded that she should not come from the gutter, or, at least, that she should have washed the filth of the gutter from her hands. Louise de la Vallière was well born, beautiful, and pathetic. De Montespan was magnificent in her strumpetry. La Pompadour had taste and culture and discretion. She was intelligently interested in public affairs, though her amateur essays in statesmanship were largely responsible for the misfortunes of the reign of Louis the Well Beloved. The Du Barry was a harlot *san phrase*, and when she won the King's favour it was clear to all men that monarch and monarchy were both in their dotage. Du Barry was the herald of the French Revolution as Rasputin was the herald of the Russian Revolution.

Yet when the old king died and his woman was banished, had Louis XVI been a Henry IV or a Louis XIV, the glamour of the monarchy might still have been recovered and the Revolution

averted. But the task was too great for the sixteenth Louis and his Austrian wife. They drifted to disaster. And it was the tragedy of Marie Antoinette that she—young, kindly, not without intelligence—should have become in the popular mind the typical figure of tyrannical and inefficient royalty. To the harassed and overtaxed France of the years before the Revolution, she was "the Austrian," caring for nothing but her idle pleasures and the interests of her family and her native country. Her extravagance and frivolity were grossly exaggerated. Foul and lying stories were told of her life, and every one of them was believed. The Paris mob held her responsible for their empty cupboards. Had she died in 1789, her husband might have saved his throne and his head.

Time has reversed the contemporary judgment. The suffering and the humiliation of her last years, with the culminating scene on the Place de la Revolution, have made Marie Antoinette a heroine of romance. But she was, in fact, a very ordinary young woman, not very beautiful, ill-educated, well-intentioned, light-hearted, and sometimes

light-headed, who might have been a happy wife and mother had she not had the misfortune to be the daughter of a masterful empress and the wife of an incompetent king.

Marie Antoinette became Queen of France because Maria Theresa, in her reasonable and never-ceasing fear of Frederick of Prussia, regarded an alliance with France as the first of political necessities. Thanks largely to the influence of La Pompadour, the alliance was effected in 1755, the year of Marie Antoinette's birth. Her mother was then thirty-seven, a woman absorbed in the cares of statesmanship, far too occupied to give personal care to the upbringing of her small daughter, who ran wild, learning to dance, but hardly learning to read. She was barely in her teens when her marriage was arranged, the persistence of her mother and brother overcoming the dilatoriness of the French King, who hated making up his mind about anything. When the negotiations were concluded, it occurred to Maria Theresa, apparently for the first time, that her daughter was woefully ill-fitted to play a leading part in the elegant artificial at-

mosphere of Versailles. She was a healthy, self-willed hoyden who knew no French and could hardly write her name in German. So a tutor was sent for from Paris, but his pupil was with him for only an hour a day, and Marie Antoinette was still an uneducated child when she left Vienna on 21st April, 1770.

On the 6th May she reached Strasbourg, and, in a specially built pavilion on an island in mid-Rhine, she took off every shred of her German clothing, according to the etiquette of the time, to be arrayed in clothes brought from Paris, saying good-bye to her German ladies, who handed her over to the care of a suite of strangers. After another seven weary days, she met the King of France and the Dauphin outside the town of Compiègne. Louis XV was then a man of sixty—pallid, dignified, infinitely weary. Twenty-five years before he had been Louis the Well Beloved, and the ill fortune of his reign, the scandal of his life, and the heavy pressure of the times had not succeeded in entirely robbing him of his popularity. He was the *Roi fainéant*, but he was a man not without his

qualities, and he might have ruled wisely had he possessed the will. But Louis was too bored to worry. Boredom has often sat upon a throne. Charles II was bored by the whole business of a monarchy hampered by a Parliament. William of Orange and George I, sometime of Hanover, were bored by the English. Louis the Well Beloved was bored by the complexities of his reign. And Napoleon III, eager and interested while he was scheming and plotting, was bored from the moment he was installed in the Tuileries.

The shy little trembling German girl was received by the French King with the courtesy that was his habit, and with a show of affection. With him was the prince who was soon to be her husband —a gawky, ill-made boy of seventeen—and others of the royal family, among them the King's withered spinster daughters, to whom he had never shown the smallest affection and who were the constant objects of his not too delicate humour. The King was affable, but Madame Adelaide, Madame Victoire, and Madame Sophie were markedly cold. They disliked the Austrian alliance and the Aus-

trian marriage. They were jealous of Marie Antoinette's youth and good looks. Some years before, the fourth sister, Madame Louise, had chosen the better way, and was safe in a convent at St. Denis.

Louis welcomed the girl with proper dignity and warmth, but he was too slothful and too indifferent to public opinion to save her from insult. The poor child was overwraught and weary on this first night at the French Court, but at the royal supper she noticed the smiling Du Barry conspicuous among the courtiers. Young and inexperienced as she was, Marie Antoinette had spirit enough to resent the affront. The Court and the royal family had, in fear of the King, accepted the royal favourite. But from the moment of her arrival at Versailles until the death of Louis, Marie Antoinette refused to recognise the presence of the gutter-snipe mistress, and this despite the warnings of her worldly-wise mother that it was foolish to excite dangerous enmity.

Marie Antoinette was married to the Dauphin on 16th May, but for reasons which it is unnecessary to recapitulate the marriage was not consum-

mated for some years. Many of her subsequent troubles were due to this misfortune, for which she had no sort of responsibility. She was on the best of terms with her husband. She succeeded in winning over many of the personages who had been prepared to dislike her. But she was a woman starved. The unsatisfied natural craving had the worst possible effect on her character, encouraging her capriciousness, and compelling her to take a leading part in the hectic frivolities of the Court. But the extravagance with which she has been constantly charged was maliciously exaggerated. A scapegoat was badly needed, and the Austrian was held responsible for the financial chaos that existed in France long before she crossed the Rhine, and, indeed, before she was born.

Louis XV died on 10th May, 1774, the Du Barry having been bundled out of the palace a week before, and Louis XVI, not a little fearful, reigned in his place. His wife had grown from an unformed child into a beautiful woman. Arthur Young thought her the most beautiful woman at the Court. She was restless, ambitious, frequently disregard-

ing the fantastic etiquette soon to be wiped off the earth. Of all the tiresome incidents of the life at Versailles, the dining and supping in public were the most wearing. "If kings do not dine like other people, they lose much of the pleasure of life," wrote Arthur Young in 1787; "their station is very well calculated to deprive them of much, and they support a nonsensical experiment, the sole tendency of which is to lessen the remainder."

When Marie Antoinette became Queen, she was still supremely ignorant. Her friendships were impulsive and often imprudent. She was often guilty of breaches of good taste. As time went on, her extravagancies grew greater and her interference in public affairs more frequent and direct. It was largely owing to her insistence that Turgot gave place to Necker as Minister of Finance, and, responding to the constant urging of her mother and brother, she contrived to affect French foreign policy in a manner that gave at least some ground for the charge that she was an Austrian agent at her husband's Court. Her first child, Marie Theresa Charlotte, afterwards the Duchesse d'Angoulême,

was born in 1778, after the Queen had been married for eight years, and her position in France was considerably strengthened by the birth of a son three years later. But nothing could radically affect her unpopularity. She remained the object of suspicion and dislike. Everything that she did was criticised. When she built the Trianon, with its private theatre, she was denounced for attempting to shut the King away from his people. If on occasion she threw dignity aside and tried for a while to be a woman among women, she was accused of forgetting what was due to her husband and the monarchy. The Queen could do no right. For three years after the birth of the Dauphin her influence grew steadily greater, but by the beginning of 1784 the pen of Beaumarchais, with *The Marriage of Figaro*, had shaken her influence and that of the monarchy; and by the end of 1785 the affair of the necklace had destroyed both.

The Marriage of Figaro, with its thin, wire-drawn intrigues, sentiments, and sarcasms has its place, and by no means a small one, in the story of the years that preceded the Revolution. Beau-

marchais made fun of the privileges of high birth, and the men and women of high birth, the Queen among them, laughed at the joke. The King forbade the performance of Beaumarchais' play in Paris, but the Queen persuaded him to change his mind. She had no idea of its significance. She found it amusing, and she was attracted by everything and everybody outside the tiresome circle of Versailles. Six years before, when Voltaire was in Paris, she had been eager to see the man the purport of whose existence had been—I quote Carlyle—"to wither and annihilate all whereon majesty and worship for the present rest," and was with difficulty dissuaded from sending for him.

The story of the diamond necklace is one of the most fantastic and incredible incidents in the whole of recorded history. Think of the imbroglio—a prince both of the Empire and the Church, madly in love with the Queen who loathed him, persuaded by an adventuress, by means of forged letters and the help of the irrepressible Cagliostro, that his passion was returned; a diamond necklace bought for the Queen, immediately to be stolen by the

adventuress, and, with the discovery of the fraud, the Queen's fame besmirched. The Cardinal de Rohan proved himself the most complete of all love-sick fools, and his folly was among the factors that sent the Queen to the guillotine.

Marie Antoinette was furious. It was intolerable that her name should be linked with that of a man whom she detested. It was intolerable that she should be made to appear recklessly extravagant at a time of acute public distress, and at this crisis she acted with really tremendous courage. Perhaps she could not anticipate that all the world would disbelieve her, but she determined that her good name should be re-established by a public trial, and the Cardinal de Rohan was arrested.

But, great as was her courage, it would have been a thousand times better for her if the scandal had been hushed up. De Rohan was acquitted by his peers, and the adventuress, who had fooled him, escaped from her prison to London. Three parts of France believed that the Austrian was guilty, even though they hardly knew of what, and the story of the diamond necklace was to be repeated and re-

peated until it became a permanent part of the indictment against the Queen.

From the date of the Rohan intrigue, Marie Antoinette began to take a much larger personal part in the government of France, and her intervention in public affairs—forceful, not unintelligent, but ill instructed—hastened the end. She never understood the French, whom she disliked because they never understood her. The story that she sent cartloads of French money to Austria is, of course, grotesque, but she was responsible for the pledging of French credit for Austria's benefit, as she was responsible for the appointment of the unscrupulous and incompetent Lomenie, Archbishop of Toulouse, to succeed the competent Calonne as Finance Minister.

In the early scenes of the greatest drama of modern history, it is pathetically clear that, with her greater understanding, Marie Antoinette was as completely bewildered as her stupid husband. For a while she hoped great things from Mirabeau. She consulted him; she tried to bribe him. But she never trusted him or adopted his advice.

Later on, she behaved equally foolishly to Lafayette.

Louis accepted changes of fortune with stolid resignation. It was all very well to talk of driving the people back, but who was to drive them? It was futile to kick against the pricks. His wife urged him to fly long before the royal family was compelled to move from Versailles to Paris. But he refused, and he had little stomach for the fatal journey to Varennes, made possible by the courage and enterprise of Fersen, that very great Swedish gentleman, and the one figure of fine chivalry and unselfish devotion who played any part in Marie Antoinette's life.

A civilisation was re-making itself. A nation was in the throes of a new birth. It was decreed that old things should pass away and that all things should become new, that France, which in the eighteenth century had fed on negations and had been deluded by shams, should again find its soul, and in the welter it was inevitable that the unfortunate should suffer even more than the wicked. And it must be remembered that to the excited, suspicious, and bewildered France of the Revolution the Queen

quite naturally should be the enemy. It was impossible to hate the easy-going King. In the virtual imprisonment of the Tuileries, Arthur Young records that "the King is as plump as ease can render him," while the Queen, as well she might, looked ill and careworn. It was the Queen who had feasted the Flemish troops at Versailles when the people of Paris were starving. It was the Queen who had persuaded her husband to break his oaths. It was the Queen who was continually plotting to destroy the new liberty by force, and even, so it was whispered, to poison the King and make his brother, the Comte d'Artois, Regent of France. All these things, and worse, were believed. Some of them were true.

From the Tuileries the royal family was removed to the Temple, where Marie Antoinette had to endure the insults of Hébert, the most unspeakable blackguard that the French Revolution produced, and who was to appear again with grosser insults at her trial. Never can there have been a sadder woman than Marie Antoinette in the Temple, the woman, in Hilaire Belloc's fine phrase, "of impatient energy and unfruitful

graciousness," now unable to do anything to save herself or her children. The laughter-loving Queen who a few years before had rouged her face to play the leading part in the comedies of Beaumarchais in the Trianon theatre, was now friendless, neglected, and affronted, with the knowledge that anything that her friends across the French frontier might attempt to do for her would only hasten her end. And the end came on 14th October, 1793, in the revolutionary court of the Palais de Justice, with the grim Fouquier-Tinville as prosecutor, soon himself destined for the guillotine, and with Hébert's accusations, so foul that Robespierre when he heard them was for once moved to genuine rage, for fear that their exaggeration might secure acquittal. Dignity did not fail her. In her last hours she was eminently worthy of her lineage and her caste. She died in the same year as Mme. Roland and Charlotte Corday. She was thirty-eight, she had been twenty-three years in France, and her life in the country to which political necessity and her mother's ambition had sent her may be accurately described as a progress from Du Barry to the guillotine.

JOSEPHINE DE BEAUHARNAIS

JOSEPHINE DE BEAUHARNAIS
1763–1814

JOSEPHINE DE BEAUHARNAIS

SOME few queen consorts have ruled their husband's countries. Some few have ruled their husbands. Most queen consorts have done neither. Josephine de Beauharnais, Empress of the French, was one of them. She had no political knowledge or ambition. She never had the smallest influence over Napoleon. But she held him. He fell in love with her when he was a boy. He forgave her follies and her worse than follies. And she remained supreme among the many women who were his playthings.

On 3rd November, 1793, in the blackest days of the Terror, Jean Alexandre de Beauharnais, one of the aristocrats who had espoused the revolutionary cause, and his wife Josephine, then a woman of thirty, were among the batch of prisoners bundled into the prison of Les Carmes. Two years before, de Beauharnais had been elected President of the Constituent Assembly. In 1792 and in the

summer of 1793 he had fought with some distinction with the revolutionary armies. But, with the republic in imminent danger from enemies without and traitors within, every aristocrat was a suspect. The services of de Beauharnais to the republic were forgotten. The fact that he was a Vicomte was remembered, and from Les Carmes, after a short imprisonment, there came for him the usual mock trial and the guillotine.

De Beauharnais had all the pride of his caste, and he faced his fate with imperturbable courage. But courage was not one of Josephine's qualities, and in the early weeks of her imprisonment she was in a condition of hysterical despair. There is, however, a certain virtue even in lightness of character. There was pleasant company in Les Carmes, a Mme. Tallien with whom to gossip and a General Hoche with whom to flirt. Josephine had used the days of her husband's revolutionary pre-eminence to make influential friends for herself. Feminine charm can touch the heart even of a Terrorist, as Mme. Tallien had proved, and Josephine could count on such good will and benevolence

that a fortnight after the Viscount was guillotined she was set free.

Josephine Tascher de la Pagerie was a Creole, born in the island of Martinique, the daughter of a family of well-born ne'er-do-wells. When she was sixteen her marriage with de Beauharnais was arranged by her aunt, a masterful lady, who had for years been Alexandre's father's mistress. The marriage was a failure. Alexandre declared that his girl wife was not as pretty as he had expected. She was uneducated, ill-informed, childish, and she completely bored a young man who was already reading Rousseau and dreaming of a new world of equality and content. She was jealous, she was wildly extravagant, and she maddened Alexandre with her tears. Her eldest child, Eugène, was born in September 1781. Her daughter, Hortense, was born in April 1783. Immediately afterwards, Alexandre secured a deed of separation. Josephine was given an adequate income, and she went to live for a while at the Abbaye de Panthemont, where, as was usual with her, she made amusing friends. She learned a good deal of the great world, and, so it

is said, consoled herself with casual love-affairs. In 1788 she went with Hortense to Martinique, returning to Paris in the full tide of the Revolution. A sort of half reconciliation was effected with her husband, though they continued to live apart, and she shared the reflected glory of his short-lived pre-eminence in revolutionary councils.

Josephine left Les Carmes a widow with two children, and without a penny. Her husband's possessions had been confiscated. She had no linen, no furniture, no ready money. But she came out of prison into a new Paris. The men of Thermidor had conquered. The Terror had come to an end, and the dissolute and dishonest Barras had succeeded the scrupulous Robespierre. It was through Mme. Tallien that Josephine was introduced into the salons of the Directoire and attracted the favourable notice of Barras himself. For a time her financial troubles were at an end. Eugène and Hortense were sent to expensive schools, Josephine had a small house in Paris and a cottage in the country, and such position as belongs to the acknowledged mistress of a republican dictator. But whatever

money she received from Barras she promptly spent, and, however much money she paid, she always owed much more. Josephine was almost the only character in the Napoleon drama of whom the venomous Bourrienne has a good word to say, but he sorrowfully records that "she nourished to excess a taste for splendour and expense." In the spring of 1795, Napoleon Bonaparte came to Paris. He was poor, friendless, and *gauche*. He had distinguished himself at the siege of Toulon, but he had been patronised by Robespierre, and he shared the disgrace that followed Thermidor. In October, however, he was of incalculable service to the Directoire with the famous "whiff of grape-shot" that brought the revolutionary activities of the Faubourgs to a definite end. Barras made him a General of Division, and, when he met Josephine, he had successfully attained the first step in a career that has no parallel in human annals.

The silent, dour Corsican was bewildered by the gaiety, and probably shocked by the undraped levity, of the Tallien circles, but when he saw Josephine he fell head over ears in love with her.

Napoleon was, more than any other man, the complete slave of his ambition, and his passion for Josephine is almost the only incident in his life that suggests that ambition was ever forgotten. Certainly he had nothing to gain by marriage with a widow six years his senior, and with two children and charms already beginning to fade. But from their first meeting he was determined to marry her. It never seems to have occurred to him to suggest any other arrangement. She hesitated. She had listened to his grandiloquent talk. She was by no means persuaded of his capacity to do more than talk of greatness. She was a little afraid of him. And it was Barras who insisted that the marriage should take place. He was anxious that the young General should have his way. He was still more anxious to get rid of Josephine. Like Alexandre de Beauharnais, he had grown "tired and bored." Napoleon and Josephine were accordingly married on 8th March, 1796, Barras and Tallien being the two chief witnesses. Two days afterwards Napoleon started for the first Italian campaign.

He owed his command, not to the favour or the

gratitude of Barras, but to the judgment of Carnot, who had studied the plan of campaign which Napoleon had prepared and was convinced by its masterly audacity. Napoleon left Paris on 21st March. By the middle of May he had defeated the Sardinians and had compelled the King to yield Savoy and Nice to France, he had beaten the Austrians at Lodi, the first of his great battles, and he had marched in triumph to Milan. All through these crowded weeks he had found time to write daily letters to his wife, couched in such terms of exaggerated sentimentality that showed Napoleon had not forgotten Rousseau and *La Nouvelle Héloïse.* He urged her to join him in Italy. But Josephine preferred to enjoy her husband's triumphs comfortably in Paris, where the wife of General Bonaparte was loudly acclaimed, whenever she was seen in the streets, by crowds unfamiliar with victories. When at last she could delay no longer, the poor frivolous butterfly was heart-broken. "She burst into tears and sobbed as if she was going to punishment."

Josephine arrived in Milan at the end of June.

She was fêted and showered with costly gifts which she greedily accepted, but she was not amused. Napoleon's scorching passion wearied her, and fidelity did not enter into her calculations. When he was away from Milan, she flirted desperately and with the complete indifference to consequences generally the characteristic of the feather-headed. Everybody liked her. She was charming and gracious and natural, always eager to be pleasant and kind, and never interfering in public affairs. She spent the autumn of 1797 in journeyings through northern Italy, being received everywhere as a queen. She returned to Paris on New Year's Day, 1798, nearly a month after Napoleon's return after a two years' campaign during which he had won eighteen pitched battles and taken one hundred and fifty thousand prisoners, and, while nominally freeing Italy from the Austrian yoke, had ruthlessly stolen masterpieces of Italian art for the enrichment of the French capital.

In May 1798, Napoleon started on the Egyptian adventure, still over head and ears in love with his wife. But he was no sooner out of the way than she

re-started a flirtation, to use a euphemism, with Hippolyte Charles, a young soldier with whom she had philandered in Milan, and the flirtation, which she apparently took little care to conceal, was reported to her husband by his brothers, all of whom detested her. The stern Madame Mère shivered at her daughter's extravagance. The brothers and sisters envied her manner of *femme du monde* and resented her supposed influence over their brother, to whom they were already confidently looking for advancement and fortune. And Josephine behaved amiably to them all and went on spending money with extraordinary recklessness. She bought Malmaison, piling up immense debts for the furniture. She borrowed right and left. Charles was with her at Malmaison, and Napoleon, to whom the incident was reported, found consolation in the arms of Madame Foures, a pretty little milliner from Carcasone.

Napoleon was back in Paris in October 1799; and the greatest proof of his genius and of the futility of the Directoire is that the Egyptian fiasco did not ruin his career. His brothers had met him

at the coast, full of stories of Josephine's follies, and Josephine was thoroughly frightened. She hurried to her husband's house in the Rue de la Victoire. But he had locked his door and refused to see her. For hours she knelt outside weeping and pleading, and, at last, the door was opened, and Josephine, who had an eye for drama, pleaded for pardon with her children by her side, and was forgiven. To the horror of the family, Napoleon paid her debts, which amounted to considerably over a million francs, and the fact that they were seen everywhere together was a complete contradiction of the stories of the coming divorce which the family industriously circulated. Napoleon always professed that he himself had gained little from the Italian campaign, but his ability to meet his wife's liabilities suggests that Italy had been much more profitable than he ever admitted.

The experience had been severe and was never forgotten. Even with her limited intelligence, Josephine realised that Napoleon and all that he could give her were worth discretion and the sacrifice of caprice. The scene in the Rue de la Victoire was

the prelude to her years of greatness. A month later, thanks largely to the astuteness of his brother Lucien, the *Coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire was successfully engineered. Napoleon was First Consul and Josephine was the first lady in France. Her gracious kindliness remained, and she acquired a new dignity suitable to her new position, and a tact which was really nothing but her own good heart. She knew nothing about politics, and never pretended to know. She continually asked small favours for other people, and she was immensely useful in increasing Napoleon's popularity, both among the old Jacobins and the returning aristocrats. There was nothing of the raffishness of the Directoire about the Consulate Court. Napoleon insisted that there should be no scandals, that the doors should be closed to women with besmirched reputations, and Josephine was compelled, perforce, and doubtless with some regret, to part from some of her old friends. Malmaison was then, as it was till her death, her chief delight. The garden which she loved became the most beautiful in France.

The years of the Consulate were the happiest years of Josephine's life, as they were the years of Napoleon's greatest achievements—the years of Marengo and Hohenlinden, of the settlement of France with the Concordat and the Code Napoleon, and finally of the Peace of Amiens, which was the recognition of his greatness and of the fact that his armies had made France the arbitress of Europe. He was First Consul for life, with a personal authority greater even than that of Louis XIV, and when the Peace of Amiens was signed he was only thirty-three! He had already the right to nominate his successor, and he was dreaming of founding a dynasty. But Josephine had given him no son. His adventures with other ladies had made it clear that the failure was due to her and not to him, and Josephine began to dread what might happen. Of his brothers, Napoleon would have chosen Louis, perhaps the most unattractive of them all, as his successor. Joseph had no flair; Lucien, by far the ablest of them, was too independent. Jerome, destined in later years to make his brother ridiculous, was entirely untrustworthy. So it must be

Louis, *faute de mieux*. Louis was unmarried, and Josephine determined that her daughter Hortense should be his wife. She was a devoted mother, and her children adored her. But she deliberately plotted to arrange a marriage which appeared likely to strengthen her position, entirely regardless of her daughter's happiness. Hortense was in love with Duroc, one of the well-born of Napoleon's soldiers. She disliked Louis. Her life with him was miserable from beginning to end; but her mother's ambition was ultimately realised, for her son Louis reigned in France as Napoleon III.

Josephine's fears increased with her husband's greatness. The simplicity of the early days of the Consulate was succeeded by formal and elaborate ceremony. She was compelled to leave Malmaison for St. Cloud, and Napoleon and his wife were treated with a ceremonial respect accorded only to sovereigns. Josephine rebelled and protested, but Fouché, always her friend, warned her not to annoy Napoleon. "He will be king or emperor, or what he will." She was horrified by the happenings round her, particularly by the murder of the Duc

d'Enghien, but she was helpless and as apprehensive as her mother-in-law. Perhaps these two women, with Talleyrand and Fouché, were the only people at the Consulate Court who were convinced that the day of glory would end in a night of disaster.

In 1804, the First Consul became the Emperor, the Senate having decided that France needed "the hereditary rule of a single man, who, raised above all, is to defend public liberty, maintain equality, lower his *fasces* before the sovereignty of the people who proclaim him." On 4th December, Josephine was crowned Empress in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame by Pope Pius VII, the old, kindly pontiff, brought from Rome sorely against his will, to be treated with brusque discourtesy by the great adventurer. Josephine wore "a robe of white satin trimmed with silver and gold and besprinkled with golden bees: her waist and shoulders glittered with diamonds, while on her brows, rested a diadem of the finest diamonds and pearls, valued at more than a million francs." But she was surrounded with envy and malice. Her brothers-in-law had protested

against her being crowned with her husband. Her sisters-in-law bore her train, protesting against the indignity, and as she ascended the steps of the cathedral she tripped over her mantle and nearly fell. Before consenting to crown the Emperor and Empress, the Pope had insisted that there should be a religious marriage, and they were married by Napoleon's uncle, the Cardinal Fesch, two days before the coronation.

For another two years Josephine was comparatively happy. She accepted the new and far more elaborate etiquette of the Imperial Court, with its crowd of highly ornamented officials and its retinues of unnecessary servants. It grieved her that she was not permitted to receive her old friends, for Josephine had absolutely no intellectual resources. She never read, she hated sports, she disliked music, and she bungled with embroidery. She liked cards, but her real joy was her toilette. She spent a fortune on clothes and jewels, regularly over-spending her allowance, with the consequence of scenes with the Emperor. And, bored as she often may have been by the details of

the ceremony, she was amused by the pageantry of 1805 and 1806. She was with Napoleon when he was crowned King of Italy in Milan. She was at Strasbourg during the war with Austria and shared the triumphs of Austerlitz. She was in Munich when her son married Princess Augusta of Baden—one of the few thoroughly happy marriages that Napoleon arranged—and, despite his many infidelities, Napoleon was still her lover. He wrote to her from Warsaw in the winter of 1806: "There is only one woman for me." But Josephine knew of his intrigue with Mme. Walewski, and Napoleon's refusal to permit her to go to the Polish capital brought back in more poignant form the fears of a few years before.

Apparently Napoleon first began seriously to consider a divorce after his interview with the Czar Alexander at Tilsit in the summer of 1807. He had now two ambitions—to establish a dynasty in France, and to establish his position among European sovereigns by an alliance with one of the royal Houses. For two years he hesitated and temporised. There is no question that he remained deeply at-

tached to Josephine. And he was superstitious. He feared that his good luck would leave him if he divorced his wife. Moreover, it was difficult to secure a satisfactory successor. There was much talk of a Russian marriage, but the Czar never allowed it to be more than talk. But political considerations and the constant pressure of his advisers caused Napoleon, in 1809, to hesitate no longer. The divorce must be arranged. Bourrienne relates Josephine's own account of the interview in which Napoleon told her of his intention:

"It was the 30th November, 1809: well do I remember the sinister expression of his countenance on that day; we were dining together as usual, and during that sorrowful repast I had not uttered a word, and he had only broken silence to ask one of the servants what it was o'clock. As soon as Bonaparte had taken his coffee he dismissed all his attendants, and I remained alone with him. His features sufficiently marked what was passing in his mind, and I knew that my hour was come. Coming close to me, he took my hand, pressed it to his heart, and, after gazing at me for a few moments

in silence, he uttered these fatal words, 'Josephine, my dear Josephine! you know I have loved you: to you alone do I owe the only moments of happiness I have tasted in this world. But, Josephine, my destiny is superior to my will; my dearest affections must give way to the interests of France.' 'Say no more!' I exclaimed. 'I understand you; I expected this, but the blow is not the less severe.' I had not power to say more, continued Josephine; I know not what took place after; strength and reason at once forsook me, and when I recovered I found myself in my chamber. Your friend, Corvisart, and my poor daughter were with me. Bonaparte came to see me in the evening, and oh! Bourrienne, how can I give you an idea of what I then felt! even the interest he appeared to feel for my situation seemed an additional cruelty. Alas! I had good reason to fear ever becoming an empress."

Broken-hearted though she may have been, Josephine was shrewd enough to make a good bargain for herself. Eugène's position was definitely regularised. She stipulated that her debts should be paid, that she should have an ample allowance,

and that she should retain the title of Empress. The Elysée Palace, now the home of the President of the Republic, was given her for a Paris residence, with Malmaison and a hunting-box at Navarre. She received the utmost consideration and respect from her ex-husband. The divorce ceremony, attended by all the Bonaparte family, was in no sense a humiliation. Napoleon declared that he had been compelled "to sacrifice the sweetest affections of my heart." He praised his wife's love and tenderness, and declared that for fifteen years she had been "the ornament of my life." With a trembling voice Josephine read a short address that had been carefully written for her, in which she said that her son, Eugène, approved her sacrifice. "The tears," said Eugène, "that his resolution has caused the Emperor are sufficient to glorify my mother."

So Josephine passed from the scene of her greatness, graciously, and perhaps without bitterness, but with the heavy heartbreak of a pleasant, foolish woman compelled to cede pre-eminence to a rival. She was made the sadder by her daughter's

unhappiness, but as time went on she ceased to grieve or to regret. The simpler life meant better health. She had time for the flowers that she loved, and her life became more and more centred on her grandchildren. And, everywhere she went, Josephine was beloved by the simple and by the noble. "You turn the head of everybody who comes near you," her son wrote to her from Milan. But the old Josephine continued, piling up debts and spending far more than her very large allowance.

And so to the years of disaster. As the soldiers of the Grand Army, starving and frost-bitten, stumbled back from Russia, there was much talk of Josephine. "He shouldn't have left the old girl. She brought him luck." And Napoleon himself more than half believed that they spoke the truth.

Josephine was with Hortense at Navarre at the time of the first abdication in 1813. She went back to Malmaison at the request of the Czar Alexander, who assured her that the position of herself and her children was perfectly safe. The allied kings and statesmen waited on her. She was treated with the utmost deference, but it was she who grieved

for Napoleon in Elba far more than Marie Louise, and before the Hundred Days began, Josephine, shriven and with her children kneeling by her side, died with the name of Bonaparte on her lips. Twenty thousand persons passed the catafalque where the Empress lay in state. Royal honours were hers at her funeral.

Josephine was a very human woman—capricious, indiscreet, wildly extravagant, quite unmoral, and everybody loved her, for, as has been said, no word of malice ever crossed her lips. She took no joy in seeing an enemy suffer. She never intrigued. She never flagged in kindly service. There have been nobler women in high places. But few more lovable.

CAROLINE OF BRUNSWICK

CAROLINE OF BRUNSWICK

1768–1821

CAROLINE OF BRUNSWICK

IF there was a certain dignity and culture in the Court of the Elector of Hanover at the beginning of the eighteenth century when, by the grace of God and the English Parliament, the Elector George Louis became King George I, there was little either of dignity or culture in the Court of Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, in the last decade of the century, when the Duke's daughter, Caroline Amelia Augusta, was chosen by cruel fortune to be the consort of King George IV.

Charles William Frederick was a man of ability and ambition, always resentful of his comparative unimportance, and eager to play a larger part in European affairs. He was a capable soldier, and was killed while fighting bravely at Jena, as his son, Byron's "Brunswick's Fated Chieftain," was killed nine years later at Quatre-Bras. The Duke's wife, Augusta, the sister of George III, was an

addle-pated, mischievous, and extremely tiresome woman for whom her husband professed no regard. There was, of course, at the Court—the Versailles tradition would have made it necessary if there had been no more human reasons—a *maîtresse en tître* a certain Mlle. de Hertzfeldt, a woman of sound common sense, whose influence, so far as it went, was used with wisdom and discretion. In 1794, Lord Malmesbury came to Brunswick from London to arrange the marriage of Caroline with her English cousin. She was then a woman of twenty-six, as Lord Malmesbury described her in his diary: "pretty face, not expressive of softness—her figure not graceful—fine eyes, good hand, tolerable teeth, but going, fair hair and light eyebrows—good bust, short, with what the French call '*des épaules impertinentes.*' " She was high-spirited, unaffected, impulsive, and absolutely undisciplined. "*Elle n'est pas bête,*" said her father to Malmesbury, "*mais elle n'a pas du jugement.*" Mlle. de Hertzfeldt warned Malmesbury that the princess was entirely tactless and that she never thought before she spoke, and, before the formal betrothal, the prin-

cess received a letter from her uncle, the English King, warning her not to be too vivacious and to make up her mind that, when she arrived in England, she must live a quiet and secluded life. Caroline was eager for the marriage, though the character of her future husband must have been quite well known to her. The First Gentleman in Europe was notorious throughout Europe. But Caroline was twenty-six!

George had married Mrs. Fitzherbert in 1785. The marriage was not legal in England although it was canonical, and Caroline was too familiar with the vagaries of royal husbands to regard the incident as of any great importance. But George IV, of whom so little good can be said, always regarded Mrs. Fitzherbert, almost the one decent friend whom he ever had, as his wife, and it was only sheer hard necessity that compelled him to agree to the marriage with his cousin. The King and Parliament both earnestly desired that the Prince of Wales should have an heir, and the King had made his son's marriage the condition of once more paying his overwhelming debts. King George had

selected the bride and would hear of no other. But Queen Charlotte—perhaps because of her dislike of her sister-in-law—was opposed to the match and wished her son to marry the Princess Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, a relative of her own, who was to be Queen of Prussia and a thorn in Napoleon's side.

Caroline, therefore, started on the long journey from Brunswick to London—it took three months to cross Europe in revolution—to meet an unwilling and indifferent husband and a hostile mother-in-law, whose prejudice had induced her to make friends with Lady Jersey, her son's latest mistress. Matrimonial tragedy was not unfamiliar in Charlotte's family. An elder sister had married the King of Würtemburg and had been taken to live in St. Petersburg, where she had fallen in love with one of the Empress Catherine's many lovers and had mysteriously disappeared, no one quite knowing whether she were alive or dead. But Caroline showed no apprehension during the voyage to England, and was, as was natural to her, monstrously indiscreet. The sententious Malmesbury gave her

much good advice. She must not gush, she must not giggle, she must not be too familiar with her ladies, she must be careful in her dress, she must wash herself thoroughly and clean her teeth, she must frequently change her underclothes. It is curious that a young woman of twenty-six should have needed this advice.

The royal party embarked at Hamburg and disembarked at Greenwich. On the last night at sea, Caroline, who could not sleep, spent the whole night walking up and down the deck with a handsome young naval officer, an indiscretion afterwards exaggerated by the scandalmongers. She was met at Greenwich by Lady Jersey—a curiously coarse insult—who drove in the carriage with her to St. James's Palace, where the Princess was presented to King George and the Prince of Wales, who, after kissing her, turned his back on her, walked to the end of the room, and asked for a glass of brandy. "*Mon Dieu!*" said the unfortunate Caroline, "*est-ce-que le Prince est toujours comme cela? Je le trouve très gros et nullement aussi beau que son portrait.*"

The marriage took place on 8th April, and the bridegroom was so drunk that he had to be held up by his equerry. There was an appalling scene on the nuptial night, and three months later the Princess was formally notified that her husband did not propose to live with her any longer, though there was no public announcement of the separation until after the birth of Caroline's daughter, Princess Charlotte Augusta, in January 1796. George's excuse was that he had discovered that the Princess had lovers before she came to England, but this was the merest subterfuge. The unfortunate woman was insulted by the Prince's mistresses, snubbed by her mother-in-law, maligned and misrepresented, and her position was made the more unhappy by her own utter lack of dignity. The actual reason for the separation has always been something of a mystery, and it has often been suggested that the Princess Charlotte was illegitimate. To the end of her days, the separation was the one subject in the world about which Caroline herself was reticent, though she often hinted that, if she would, she could a tale unfold that would destroy

the last rag of reputation that her husband possessed. In a letter written in 1820, she said: "The separation, so far from being sought for by me, was a sentence pronounced upon me without any cause assigned other than that of your own inclination, which, as your Majesty was pleased to allege, were not under your own control."

Almost immediately after the birth of her daughter, Caroline went to live at Montague House, Blackheath, in Georgian days a pleasant and attractive village. Her affection for her baby daughter explains the next caprice of this most capricious of women. Small children, mostly babies in arms, were invited by the score to Montague House, and were personally attended by the Princess of Wales. One result of this brief outburst of benevolence was the adoption of a baby boy, whom scandal soon asserted was the Princess's own. It was specifically stated by Lady Douglas, a neighbour of Caroline's, to whom, in her usual crazy, impulsive way, she had made dangerous confidences, that the Princess had admitted that she had again become a mother. It is quite possible that out of sheer devilry Caro-

line may have made such a statement, but it was certainly untrue. She was accused of misconduct with Sir Sydney Smith, with Captain Manby, and with Thomas Lawrence, the famous painter. On the petition of his son, King George appointed a commission of four peers to make what has been called a "delicate investigation" into the Princess's conduct, and they found her innocent on all counts. At the same time, they reported that her conduct had not been seemly in a woman of her rank. Sir Samuel Romilly, the great Whig lawyer, who was a friend of the Prince of Wales, writes in his diary that the parentage of the adopted boy was established beyond all doubts, and he adds: "The evidence of all the servants as to the general conduct of the Princess was very favourable to her royal highness, and Lady Douglas's account was contradicted in very many particulars."

Caroline addressed to the King a long reply to the Commissioners' report. I again quote from Romilly's diary: "Instead of the dignified defence of an injured and calumniated princess, it is a long, elaborate, and artificial pleading of an advo-

cate. . . . As a pleading, however, it is conducted with great art and ability. It is manifestly intended to be some time or other published, and it is likely when published to make a strong impression in favour of the Princess." The King, who was always eager to be Caroline's friend, replied that he was satisfied that there was no foundation whatever for the charges made against her, but that he regretted that there was evidence of "a deportment unbecoming her station."

Caroline had now become a pawn in the political game. Her letter to the King was drawn up by Perceval, the leader of the Tory opposition in the House of Commons. Perceval intended to follow the letter with a statement which would completely rehabilitate the Princess and which was expected to be full of thrilling revelations. But before the report was finished the Government of Lord Grenville and Lord Grey fell, and Perceval became Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Duke of Portland's Tory Cabinet. In 1806, the Tories were the Princess's champions. Fourteen years later her champions were the leading Whig lawyers.

After "the delicate investigation," Caroline moved from Blackheath to Kensington Palace. Byron, Tom Moore, Monk Lewis, Conversation Sharp and Lady Hester Stanhope were among the well-known people who frequented her salons. But she remained the most unconventional and unroyal of royal persons. Her guests sometimes found that they were expected to dine off mutton and onions, and she made intimate friends with a family of Italian musicians, who, naturally, exploited her for their own ends.

In 1811, it at last became clear that King George III was no longer mentally efficient, and the Prince of Wales was appointed Prince Regent by Act of Parliament. Almost immediately afterwards he asserted his right to the guardianship of his daughter, who was forcibly withdrawn from her mother's care. Princess Charlotte was intelligent above the average and was as outspoken as a girl of this post-war age. "My mother has led a bad life," she said, "but she would not have done so badly if my father had not led a worse."

In 1813, Caroline wrote to her husband com-

plaining that she was forbidden to see her daughter, and the letter, which was published in a London newspaper, stimulated public sympathy. George IV was the most unpopular monarch who ever sat on the English throne, and his neglected wife became something of a national heroine. If she had been acuter and more ambitious, she might have exploited her popularity to advantage, but she did nothing, and humiliation followed humiliation. In 1814, after Napoleon's banishment to Elba, London was visited by the allied sovereigns, who were prevented from calling on the Princess Regent, and this affront was followed by a dreadful scene with her daughter which determined her mother to shake the dust of England off her feet.

A marriage had been arranged between Charlotte Augusta and the Prince of Orange. The Princess was heiress to the throne of England; the prince was heir to the throne of Holland. It was arranged that the royal couple should pass certain months of the year in Holland, and certain months in England. But Charlotte refused to agree to live out of England, and Caroline, who had not been

consulted when the match was arranged, backed her daughter and fanned her obstinacy. The Prince Regent sent for the girl and roughly upbraided her, and she escaped from the palace and hurried in a public vehicle to her mother. The Prince Regent's brothers, the Dukes of York and Sussex, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Brougham, Whitbread, Eldon, one after the other begged the young woman to return, but she flatly refused. They told her that the new scandal would shake the throne, that the people of London would probably rise in her favour, that there might be something like a civil war, and that she would never forgive herself for the lives that would be lost. And, at last, Charlotte, weeping bitterly, said good-bye to her mother and went back to Carlton House.

Caroline had grown weary of the struggle. She wrote to Lord Liverpool telling him of her intention to leave England and to return to her native country. Parliament made her a generous provision, and on 9th August, 1814, she set out on the return journey to Brunswick, which she had left, to her sorrow, twenty years before.

From Brunswick she went on to Geneva, where she met the Empress Marie Louise, astonishingly lively and gay, with her husband in exile in Elba. At Berne it is recorded that "the Princess of Wales sang duets with Marie Louise, and then joked in rather bad taste about the trio abandoned by their husbands—herself, Marie Louise, and the Grand Duchess." In Switzerland, too, she met Carlo Sismondi, the author of the famous history of the Italian republics, a staid, middle-aged scholar, who was infatuated by her.

From Switzerland, Caroline crossed the Alps to Milan, where she engaged the handsome Bartolomeo Pergami as her courier. After a short stay she went on to Florence and to Rome, where she was received by Pope Pius VII, and scandalised Roman society by appearing at a ball in "a single embroidered garment fastened beneath the bosom, without the shadow of a corset and without sleeves." At Rome, too, she met Lucien Bonaparte, Napoleon's ablest brother. She had become hysterically fidgety. She could never stay in one place for long, and after a week she left Rome for Naples, where she

was received by the King, Joachim Murat, who, by treachery to the man who had made him, still held his throne, though he was to lose both his throne and his life within a year. At Naples, as at Rome, Caroline's curious fancy to appear almost entirely unclothed caused her to be at least partially ostracised.

Every indiscretion and every folly were faithfully reported to London. No sooner had the Princess's Italian journey begun than a corps of secret police, directed from Milan, was engaged to watch her every movement. Her English suite were growing weary of her eccentricities, and, jealous and resentful of the ever-increasing influence of Pergami, who had ceased to be a mere courier and was now the Princess's equerry. In the spring of 1815, Caroline moved north again, going first to Rome and thence to Leghorn and Genoa. Most of her English attendants went home from Genoa, the vacant places being filled by Pergami from members of his own family. In the summer she bought a villa on the shores of Lake Como. Pergami was now the Princess's chamberlain and had his place at

her table. In the winter she was in Sicily, where she was painted as a Turkish woman, a painting mentioned years afterwards at her trial as more naked than clothed, and where she bought a small estate for Pergami which gave him the title of baron.

The itch for travel continued. From Sicily she went to Tunis, from Tunis to Malta, where she secured the appointment of Pergami as a Knight of the Order of St. John; from Malta she sailed to the Pyraeus, to Constantinople, and on to Ephesus and Jaffa. From Jaffa she went to Jerusalem, visiting the Holy Places and instituting the Order of St. Caroline, of which she made Pergami the first Grand Master. In the autumn she was back in her villa on Lake Como. And here were more indiscretions, if indeed indiscretions is not an altogether too euphemistic term. The ceaseless journeyings of these first months out of England were repeated until Caroline's return in 1820. City after city was visited, generally to be left within a few days, scandal generally being left behind.

In December 1817, bitter news came to her of

the death of her daughter. In May 1816, Charlotte Augusta had married Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, afterwards King of the Belgians, and the friend and adviser of Queen Victoria's early days. The marriage was ideally happy. "Peace, love, and unanimity rule in this house," wrote Stockmar; "in a word, everything proclaims domestic happiness." But the happiness was short lived, the Princess dying in childbirth. "If Fate had been less inexorable," wrote a French historian, "how many events in the history of the royal Houses of the nineteenth century would have been altered." Certainly if Charlotte Augusta had lived, her cousin Victoria would never have been queen.

Caroline was at Florence in January 1820, when the news came to her of the death of George III and the accession of her husband. She at once determined to return to England. In France she was met by Alderman Wood, one of the most enthusiastic of her champions, who told her of the state of affairs in England, and at Saint Omer she found Brougham. He was followed by Lord Hutchinson, who, on behalf of the British Government, offered

her an annual income of fifty thousand pounds if she renounced the title of queen and never again visited England. Caroline promptly refused. She sent Pergami and her Italian attendants home, and started for Calais with Alderman Wood and her adopted son. She arrived at Dover on 5th June, and was received with enthusiasm. The crowd took the horses from her carriage and drew it to her hotel, and her journey from Dover to London was one long triumphal progress.

George struck at once, and struck hard. He sent to Parliament certain documents relating to the Queen's conduct while she had been abroad, adding: "The King has experienced a lively desire to defer by every means which lay in his power an obligation as painful to his people as to his own sentiments, but the latest step which the Queen has taken does not permit of his hesitating any longer." The Queen replied, protesting against the exclusion of her name from the liturgy, of the studied slights that had been offered to her, and of the fact that none of the royal palaces had been given her for a residence. The Tory Cabinet was

obliged half-heartedly to support the King, but the first result of the charges was the resignation of George Canning. For political reasons the Whigs became the Queen's friends, and the people were entirely on her side. She lived in Alderman Wood's house in Portman Square, and day after day crowds stood outside the house calling on the Almighty to protect the innocent.

In July a bill of divorce was introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Liverpool. In the preamble the Queen was definitely charged with adultery with Pergami. On the same day the witnesses who had been collected by the King's agents in Italy arrived in England, and had to be protected by the military and the police from the hostile mob. Petitions signed by tens of thousands were presented to Parliament against the bill, and the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen and Common Council waited on the Queen with an address in which they applauded the dignity and firmness with which she had acted. The Press, on the whole, was in her favour.

The Queen's trial began in the House of Lords on 17th August. Specific instances were given by

the prosecuting counsel of the misconduct with Pergami in various places and at various times, and then the House heard the twenty-six witnesses, nearly all of them Italians of the hotel servant type. Much of the evidence was considerably shaken by Brougham's cross-examination, and, as the trial proceeded, public sympathy with the Queen grew greater. The Ministers, even the Duke of Wellington, were hooted in the streets. The witnesses were threatened. The Queen was acclaimed. It has been pointed out by Professor Clerici as a curious proof of public sentiment that throughout this year, 1820, there was apparently not one single caricature that hinted even remotely at the errors of the Queen's life.

The proceedings in the Lords were violently denounced in the Commons. The trial was described as "a public misfortune, a degradation of the monarchy, and a dishonour to the nation." But the Queen's defence had to be heard, and on 3rd October Brougham began his famous speech, in which he denounced George IV as monarch has rarely been denounced by a subject. A large number of

witnesses, including the members of the English suite who had gone with her to Italy, were examined, and, of course, cross-examined, and the Queen's case was summarised by Denman. "This new reign," he said, "was not for our Queen a reign of peace and pardon, but the beginning of a persecution in which falsehood and malevolence were welcomed so long as they were to her injury. Her name was excluded from the liturgy, but, though the people had been prohibited from praying for her, she found in their devotion a considerable assaugement of the injustice she suffered under." "This is a bill," he continued, "to punish, to degrade, and to dethrone." He the learned Counsel and his friends were fighting "in defence of morality, Christianity, and the freedom of the world at large"—a sufficiently grandiloquent claim. Counsel concluded: "The entire, well-disposed population of England have embraced Her Majesty's cause, and, if your Lordships had the faculty of penetrating into the inner recesses of their minds, you would perceive without doubt the desire to imitate the justice, the charity, and the wisdom

of that Divine Being who in a cause, not indeed similar to this in which innocence has been proved, but one in which the guilt was evident and the fault confessed, said, 'Where are these thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more.' " It cannot be said that this peroration was very happy. Much more forcible, however, was another of the Queen's Counsel, who demanded: "Can a king obtain a dispensation from obligation the sanctity of which is recognised throughout the Christian world?"

The second reading of the bill was carried in the Lords by 123 to 95. It was then proposed to delete the divorce clause from the bill, and it is to the discredit of the Church of England that the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the Bishops of London, Worcester, and Llandaff, declared that adultery was sufficient cause for divorce, though the Archbishop of York insisted on the indissolubility of the marriage bond. The third reading was carried only by a majority of nine, and the bill was promptly dropped. There was an outbreak of popular rejoicing. The King was afraid to appear in

public, and Brougham was almost as great a popular idol as the Queen. But her popularity was brief. She had settled in a house at Hammersmith, where she was surrounded by Italians, some of them reputable, some of them the reverse. English Society stood aloof; even the wives of the peers who had voted for her kept away from the Queen; and in the summer of 1821 she made the most fatal blunder of her life. The King had definitely declined to allow her to be crowned with him. The Privy Council had unanimously supported the King in his decision, but, against the advice of her friends, Caroline presented herself at the door of Westminster Abbey on the morning of the coronation, and was turned away. This last affront broke her heart. She died on 7th August in her fifty-fourth year, and was buried in her native Brunswick.

Caroline was pursued by such persistent malevolence and was accused of so many offences of which she was innocent that it is natural to suppose that she was entirely guiltless, but her relations with Pergami were so extraordinary, and her conduct in Italy so blatant, that it is difficult to believe that

she and the ex-courier could have been merely an employer and faithful servitor.

Few royal ladies have lived so mournful a life as this—to quote Thackeray's phrase—"kindly, generous, outraged creature." That she had humour is shown in her confession: "It is true that I have been guilty of adultery, but only with the husband of Mrs. Fitzherbert."

THE END

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